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WINTER 2026

Better Photography

TRACEY SQUIRE'S
AMAZING GANNETS



REVIEWING COLOUR MANAGEMENT • MATTERS OF STYLE

CREATING A PHOTO WEBSITE • ALL ABOUT FOCUSING



KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Craig McGowan

LOCATION: Paradise Bay, Antarctica

CAMERA: Nikon D850, Tamron 150-600mm f/5-6.3

EXPOSURE: 1/1000 second @ f8, ISO 280

SITUATION: Travelling to Antarctica is both exciting and unpredictable. You never know what you're going to encounter, whether it's wildlife, weather or an amazing location. This is Paradise Bay, one of the better known locations in Antarctica. It's considered Paradise because of all the towering peaks surrounding it, but on a misty, cloudy morning like this, the clinically clean snow-capped mountains are hidden, leaving you to focus on the wonderful glacial fronts; their tortured, brittle edges only moments away from collapse. Given the choice, weather and light like this provides so much more mood and atmosphere than a bright sunny day.





KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Niall Chang

LOCATION: New Island, Falklands

CAMERA: Nikon Z8, Nikkor Z 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 VR S

EXPOSURE: 1/800 second @ f5.6, ISO 320

SITUATION: "Primarily I consider myself a landscape photographer, not a wildlife photographer and definitely not into photographing birds as I think I have ornithophobia – the fear of birds! Perhaps I've seen too many bin chickens in the city of Sydney. But on a recent trip to the Falklands, there wasn't much landscape photography to be had. Instead I had to photograph penguins and Black Browed Albatross. Coincidentally, I had watched a David Attenborough documentary about these birds prior to the trip, so I had some basic knowledge of how they raised their young. During a visit to an albatross colony on New Island, similar to capturing landscape images, I was looking for a clean background to showcase this mother and chick during their feeding ritual. The difference here is that landscapes are static whilst wildlife is dynamic and it took many frames to get one where both birds were facing me, so that I could focus on their eyes to convey the story."





Cover photo by Tracy Squire. See article on page 14.

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Photo by Michael Coyne. Full story page 80.



Achieving focus. Photo by Peter Eastway. Full story page 24.

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Here's a quick review of colour management basics - and why the colours you see on your monitor or photo book might not be what you expected!

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Not every photographer exhibits or publishes their work in print, but most of us post our photos on social media where it gets lost in a labyrinth of other images. Why not take control of your internet presence and create a personal website?

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Photography doesn't have to be just a passion, it can be good for your mental health as well. By Jackie Ranken.

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Do you know how to incorporate the X-Factor into your photography? Murray White has some PG-rated suggestions for pushing our landscapes a little further!

A Tree, A Blade of Grass. A Desert, A Grain of Sand 90

Mike Langford suggests when you are out in the landscape, try thinking inside the big picture to see what sort of visual rabbit hole you can go down. You may be surprised by how exciting that adventure can become!

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Len Metcalf is on fire. Well, on some days he's more on fire than others - can you make this work for you too?

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A photographic love letter to Cape Kidnappers and its gannets by Tracey Squire.

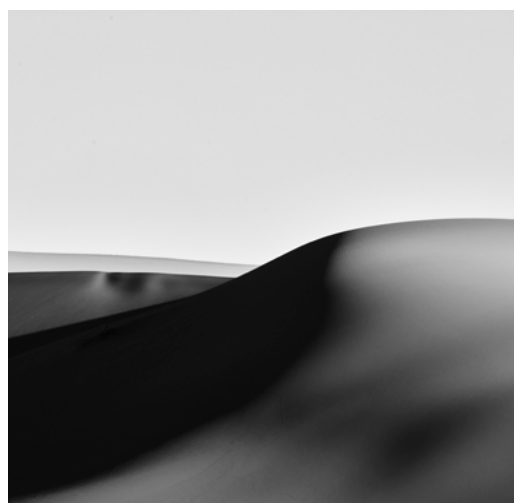


Photo by Mike Langford. Full story page 90.



Photo by Jackie Ranken. Full story page 74.

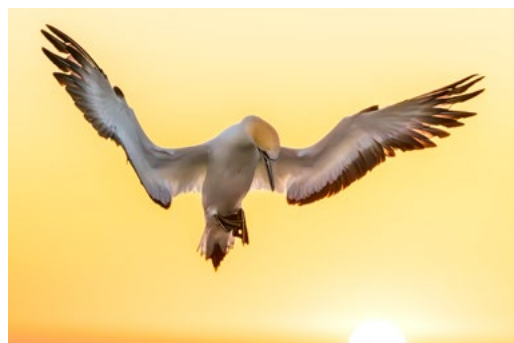


Photo by Tracey Squire. Full story page 14.

Nik Collection 9

One of the techniques Adobe, Capture One and others have got right is AI masking, where algorithms accurately determine the shape of a subject or object and create a mask for selective editing. Sure, the technology isn't always perfect, but it has been a huge time saver, even if afterwards you need to refine the mask manually.

The transition to AI tools has seen some photo apps fall behind because if one app has it, we expect all apps to have it. And the Nik Collection is listening because its new version package includes some seriously useful masking tools.

Nik says its AI Masks deliver pixel-precise subject selection in seconds. Begin by applying a tool or filter and then control or limit the part of the photo you want to be changed by creating an AI Mask - just click directly on the subject or draw a bounding box to define the area. If you've been using Adobe or Capture One AI masks, you'll be right at home.

Nik has also introduced depth masks, which analyse the image to generate a detailed depth map. For instance, if you have a landscape with foreground and background elements, the depth mask will allow you to select one or the other, based on the distance from the camera. Nik realises this remains an imprecise science and provides a series of slider controls, allowing you to feather and refine the selection to match your subject. Think of it like luminosity masking, except instead of using lightness values, it's using distance.

Other notable introductions include blending modes for Color Efex and Analog Efex, providing new ways (for Nik) to control how tools and filters interact with an image. And for the soft focus lovers, there's an halation tool that recreates the glow seen in older film stocks, where bright highlights bleed softly into surrounding darker areas.

Price is US\$180 for a licence, or US\$100 to upgrade. Check out the DXO shop for details.



DJI Pocket 4



When you read the specs on the new DJI Pocket 4, there's good reason to be impressed! Features include a 1-inch CMOS sensor which can capture 4K/240 fps footage and low-noise, low-light shots with an f2 lens. It also delivers up to 14 stops of dynamic range (which means it can retain more detail in the shadows and/or highlights) and offers 10-bit D-Log recording (which makes it much easier to achieve great results in post-production).

The magazine's editor has used DJI Pockets for many years, the gimble design providing smooth video, especially when on the move. Mind you, Apple's iPhone also works pretty well in the stabilisation stakes, but in theory the DJI Pockets 3 and 4 provide better image quality because they are using a physically larger 1-inch chip. Now, don't get too excited because a 1-inch chip actually measures 13.2x8.8 mm (16 mm diagonal) which is a long way from measuring one inch no matter how you look at it! Back in the old days when television cameras used cathode ray tubes, it was the tube that measured one inch, while the light-sensitive area inside was around 16 millimetres! Still, that was more than 50 years ago and we'd suggest the whole industry (not just DJI) is being misleading for a new generation of film makers!

Even so, the image quality on the Pocket 3 is great and with the beefed up power, the Pocket 4 can offer 4K at 240 fps for superior slow motion. However, if you're comparing the image quality with your mirrorless camera, there are differences not just in clarity, but also depth-of-field. However, the Pocket is designed to shoot subjects and situations that are not as easily handled with a larger camera. It's not one or the other – and in fact, the editor combines iPhone, Pocket and Fujifilm mirrorless footage into his presentations.

Price is around AUS \$769, but a combo package at around \$959 is probably a good deal for most readers.

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GoPro Mission 1

While we know a one-inch sensor measures merely 16 mm on the diagonal, it's still considerably larger than the average smart phone sensor, but about half the size of the Micro Four-Thirds system and a quarter the size of a full-frame sensor. Nevertheless, in the world of small point-of-view video cameras, one-inch sensors offer significant image quality improvements.

GoPro's new Mission 1 cameras offer a 50-megapixel one-inch sensor, which like the DJI Pocket 4, offers better low-light performance and up to 14 stops dynamic range.

There are three models to choose from. The Mission 1 Pro features 8K60, 4K240, and 1080p960 frame rates; 8K30 and 4K120 open gate video capture; and a new GP3 processor.

The Mission 1 Pro ILS offers the same specs, along with interchangeable lenses compatible with the Micro Four-Thirds (MFT) system. And finally, the plain old Mission 1 offers slightly defeatured video recording: 8K30 video capture; 4K120 open gate; 4K120 and 1080p240 Slo-Mo frame rates.

With a fast-charging Enduro 2 Battery, the Mission 1 cameras deliver five or more hours of recording at 1080p30 and three plus hours of recording at 4K30 on a single charge.

And to assist film-makers with less practical experience, GoPro offers 13 capture modes, each tuned for specific situations and using machine learning and scene detection to deliver better image quality. From underwater colour and stabilisation in Dive Mode to face-aware framing and tone mapping in Vlog Mode, the Mission 1 cameras can simplify many common capture scenarios.

Technically speaking, you can dial up the camera's bit rate to 240 Mbps and capture HLG-HDR, 10-bit colour with GP-Log2; timecode sync for multi-camera shoots; or maximise quality while minimising file size with GP3's new advanced encoder. There are also four microphones to deliver improved stereo recording and wind noise reduction, while 32-Bit Float audio recording helps prevent clipping. And Bluetooth 5.3 audio lets you wirelessly connect to compatible devices for high-fidelity wireless audio.



DaVinci Resolve 21 – For Photographers?

It might surprise you to learn that DaVinci Resolve for video editing can be downloaded and used for free. Blackmagic Design is hoping you will gravitate to its physical products and become a paying customer, but there is no obligation and the magazine's editor has been using DaVinci Resolve (instead of Adobe Premiere or Final Cut Pro) for his video and slide show productions.

The question we now need to ask is, could the new DaVinci Resolve 21 provide an alternative to photographers wanting to escape the Adobe Lightroom/Photoshop ecosystem? Blackmagic Design thinks so with the introduction of a Photo page to its interface, claiming it allow photographers to use Hollywood's most advanced colour tools for still photos.

There are many processes used in video colour grading that happily apply to still photography, so it's not a big step once you know how to use DaVinci Resolve. The new Photo page lets you import and manage photographs, integrating with its existing Color page for node based grading.

Nodes work in a similar way to layers in Photoshop and masks in Lightroom. In DaVinci Resolve, it's possible to add nodes in series or parallel to build complex grades, apply different corrections to different parts of an image simultaneously and use shared nodes to apply the same look across an entire album of photos at once.

The LightBox view on the Photo page gives you an overview of your entire album with grades applied. Select any image and grade it live while seeing the results update across the whole collection in real time.

Albums let you build and manage collections directly in DaVinci. Create albums based on shoot days, camera models or any desired criteria and save countless hours by tagging and making raw setting adjustments in batches.

The process isn't quite the same as we're used to with Lightroom or Capture One, but then again, it's free!



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June 21 - 26 Canterbury
July 23 - 28 Mt Cook/Mackenzie
Oct 15 - 20 South West Wilderness

2027 Workshop Dates

March 14 - 20 The Catlins
May 6 - 12 North West Wilderness



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The Catlins



North West Wilderness



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2026 World Press Photo

Carol Guzy's photograph was taken inside one of the few US federal buildings where photographers were granted access - a single hallway where Carol and others showed up, day after day, to document what was happening. It captures a harrowing moment: a family separated by the state. Luis was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents following an immigration court hearing at the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building, in New York on 26 August 2025. Luis, an Ecuadorian migrant whom his family says has no criminal record, served as the household's sole provider. His wife Cocha and their three children (aged seven, 13 and 15) were left inconsolable, facing immediate financial hardship and profound emotional trauma.

What Carol Guzy has documented is not an isolated instance, but a policy indiscriminately applied to people who arrive for hearings in good faith. It is evidence and documentation of a government policy being applied systematically to people who followed



the rules they were given. This image was selected from a larger body of work by Guzy, ICE Arrests at New York Court, awarded in the Stories category of the North and Central America region. She is the winner of the World Press Photo of the Year in 2026.

For 71 years, the annual World Press Photo Contest has recognised the best photojournalism and documentary photography produced over the previous year. This year's winners represent the best of the 57,376 photographs submitted by 3,747 photographers from 141 countries.

The Photo of the Year winner and two finalists were selected from every photograph awarded in the 2026 Contest that was taken in 2025. The Photo of the Year winner receives an additional 10,000 Euros. They and the two finalists also receive a Fujifilm GFX100 II outfit.

Sigma 85mm f1.2 DG

Over the years in *Better Photography*, we have extolled the virtues of prime lenses with wide-apertures. Perhaps the most iconic wide-aperture lens is Leica's 50mm Noctilux which was originally an f1.0 lens, but in the interests of trying to outdo the rest of the world, now has an f0.95 maximum aperture. Mind you, at around \$14,000, it's not an impulse buy!

However, the 50mm isn't the only focal length that has wide-apertures. The 35mm and 85mm often sport apertures of f1.4 and even 28mm and 24mm lenses have had f1.4 apertures over the years.

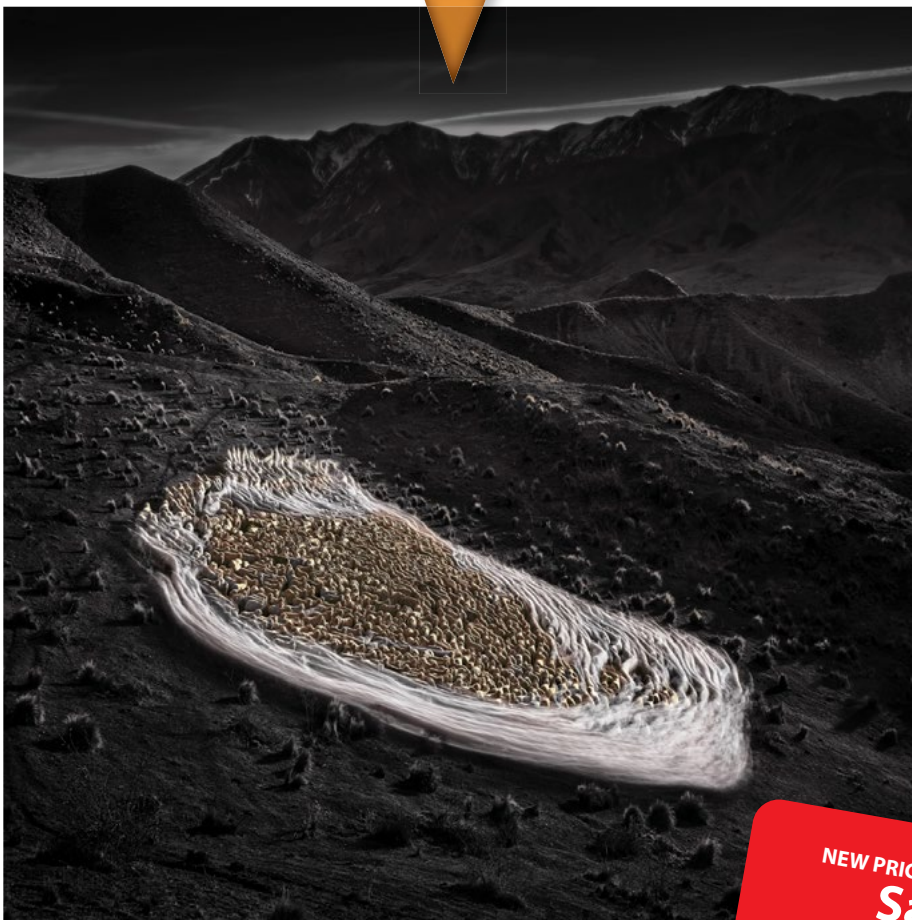
The trick to using a wide-aperture lens is to use the wide aperture! It might sound obvious, but if you shoot at f2 or f2.8 to get a slightly sharper image in the corners, you're missing the point of the incredibly shallow depth-of-field that's available. If you have f1.4, use it, at least from time to time. For portraiture, if the focus is on the eyes, the rest of the face can afford to be a little soft or out-of-focus. And if your camera has facial recognition, there's a very good chance your subject's eyes (or closest eye) will be tack sharp, contrasting wonderfully with the soft and dreamy bokeh (out-of-focus) areas in the background.

Wide-aperture lenses are favoured by portrait photographers and another portrait trick is to use a slightly telephoto lens because its perspective slightly flattens the face - and this can make your subject very happy because not only is it flattening, it's considered flattering as well!

There are quite a few 85mm f1.8 and f1.4 lenses on the market, even a few f1.2 models and now Sigma is joining them by releasing an 85mm f1.2 later this year. Although press photos show a large lens (as is required to accommodate the large maximum aperture), Sigma says it will be compact, lightweight and fast, with the autofocus system driven by dual HLA (High-response Linear Actuator) motors.

With the addition of this lens, Sigma's line-up of f1.2 prime lenses will be complete, joining the Sigma 35mm f1.2 DG II and 50mm f1.2 DG DN lenses.





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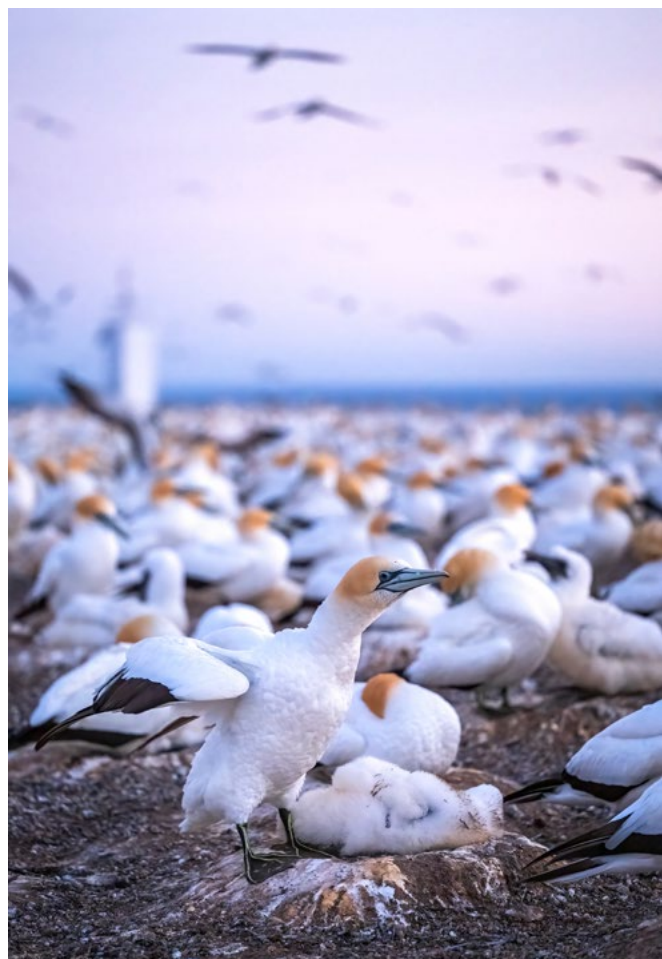


Stolen Hearts at the Edge of the World

**A photographic love letter to Cape Kidnappers and its gannets
by Tracey Squire.**







The name Cape Kidnappers evokes drama – perilous seas, high cliffs and a storied past tied to Captain Cook. But for photographers, its true allure lies elsewhere. This is a place where light, landscape and wildlife converge in extraordinary ways. And for me, it is where I lost my heart – to the wild elegance of the Australasian gannet.

Nothing quite prepares you for your first encounter with the colony. The air hums with movement and sound, wings slicing through coastal winds, thousands of birds circling, landing, calling. And yet, within that apparent chaos lies something far more intimate: moments of connection, tenderness and ritual, playing out continuously along the clifftops.

In recent years, my photography has shifted decisively toward wildlife, particularly birds. Unlike landscapes – where time, light and composition can be carefully orchestrated – bird photography demands responsiveness. It is fluid, instinctive and often unforgiving. The moment you anticipate may never come. Or it may arrive and vanish in less than a second.

Success hinges not just on technical skill, but on reading behaviour. The slight lift of a wing, a change in posture or a subtle interaction between two birds can signal what is about to unfold. At Cape Kidnappers, this awareness becomes essential. The density of birds is both a gift and a challenge: rather than searching for a subject, you are constantly editing, isolating and refining your frame.

Finding Order in Chaos

From mid-September through to late autumn, the gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers is alive with activity. During my sunrise visits in December, the breeding season was at its peak.



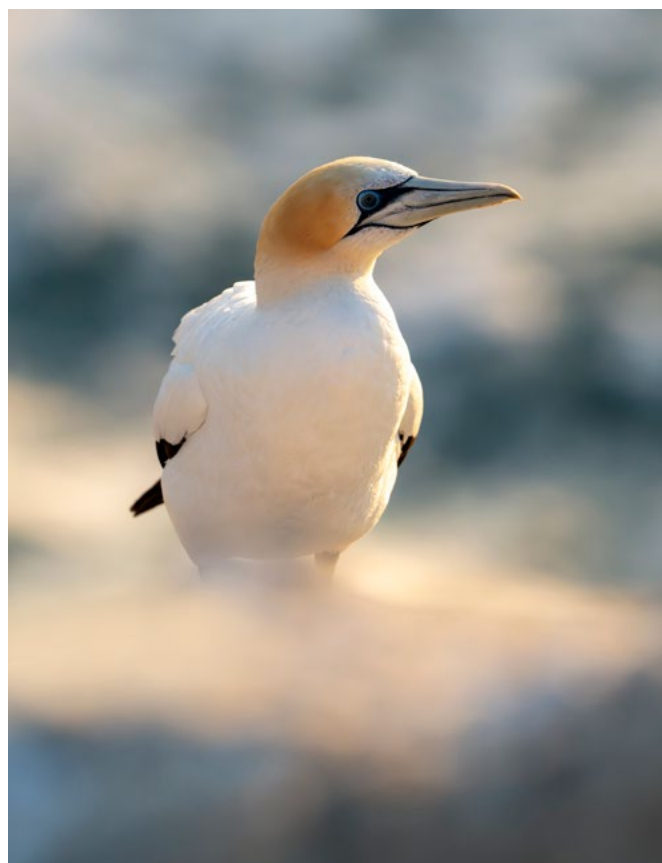
Chicks in various stages of development dotted the colony, while adults moved between courtship, incubation and feeding.

With up to 20,000 birds occupying the cliffs, the visual challenge is immediate – how do you simplify a scene of overwhelming abundance?

For me, the answer lay in compression and depth-of-field. Working primarily in the 150–400mm range, I used a wide

aperture to separate subjects from the surrounding activity. Foreground and background birds dissolved into softness, allowing a single interaction to emerge clearly within the frame. This approach not only reduced visual clutter, but helped convey the density of the colony without overwhelming the viewer.

Equally important was shutter speed. Gannets are powerful, fast-moving birds, particularly in flight. Capturing sharp detail



in their wings required fast shutter speeds, while panning techniques allowed for more dynamic, motion-driven images. The balance between freezing action and suggesting movement became a constant creative decision.

The Language of Courtship

What captivated me most on my three-day visit was not the scale of the colony, but its intimacy.

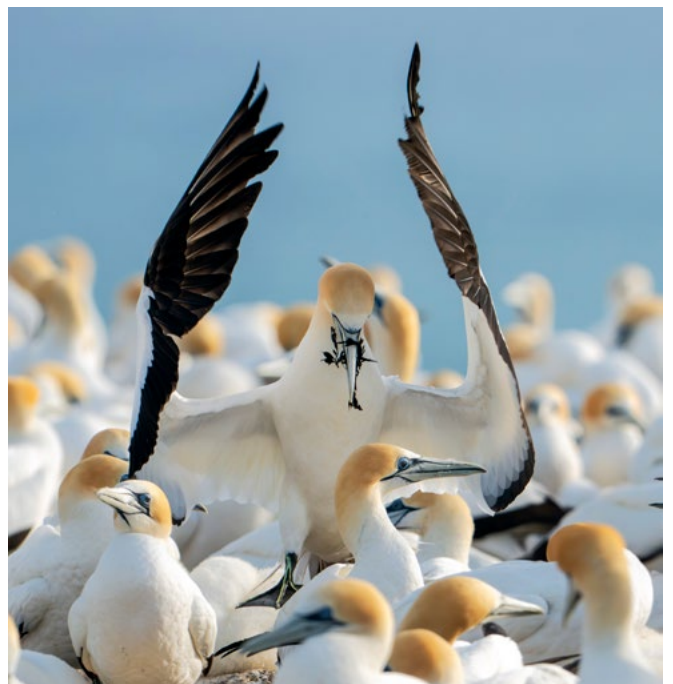
Australasian gannets form long-term pair bonds and their courtship rituals are both intricate and expressive. Pairs engage in a sequence of behaviours – beak tapping, mutual preening, wing displays and synchronised bowing – that reinforce their connection and define their territory.

Photographing these interactions required patience and observation. Rather than reacting, I learned to anticipate – to recognise the subtle cues that precede each movement. A raised head, a shift in stance, a pause. Then, the gesture unfolds.

These moments are fleeting, but when captured, they reveal something profound: a tenderness that contrasts beautifully with the harsh, windswept environment in which these birds live.

Access and Perspective

Officially known as Cape Kidnappers / Te Kauwae-a-Māui, this 13-hectare reserve lies at the southern tip of Hawke's Bay on New Zealand's North Island and boasts the title of the world's largest mainland gannet colony. Home to the Saddle and Black





Reef gannet colonies, its sheer cliffs and sweeping ocean views are a photographer's dream.

Reaching the colony is an experience in itself. While the eight-kilometre beach walk is possible, the nesting sites sit high atop the cliffs. Gannet Safaris Overland provides the only overland access, guiding visitors through a privately owned sanctuary. Departing from Te Awanga, the journey

winds through native bush, rolling farmland, riverbeds and steep gullies, skirting the world-renowned Cape Kidnappers Golf Course. Along the way, the coastline reveals itself in dramatic fashion -- sea stacks rising from the ocean as gannets, wingspans stretching nearly two metres, glide effortlessly overhead. This is an environment that rewards both wide-angle storytelling and tight, intimate framing.



Beyond the Image

Photographing wildlife carries an inherent responsibility. Cape Kidnappers is not just a spectacular location -- it is also a conservation success story. Predator-proof fencing and careful land management have allowed not only the gannet colony to thrive, but also other native species such as the kiwi. As photographers, we are not simply observers. We are storytellers.

The images we create have the power to inform, inspire and connect people to places they may never visit.

At Cape Kidnappers, I found myself drawn to the same themes: connection, resilience and the rhythm of life at the edge of the world. A single egg fearlessly protected by its parent. A chick sheltered beneath a parent's wings. A pair reaffirming their bond through ritual. These are moments that endure.



A Beginning at the Edge

From late December onwards, the colony begins to shift. Fledglings grow stronger, testing their wings against the relentless coastal winds. In the final weeks before departure, they gather at the cliff edge, facing an uncertain future.

Their first flight is instinctive and extraordinary. Without guidance, they launch into the vastness of the ocean, bound for Australian waters where they will spend years at sea before returning to breed.

To witness this is to understand something fundamental about the natural world: that endings and beginnings are often one and the same.

And for those of us behind the lens, it is a reminder of why we photograph – to hold onto moments that are, by their very nature, fleeting.

You can find more of Tracey's work at [@radarsquire](#) and [@radar_captures_wildlife](#)



FACT FILE

Location

- Cape Kidnappers / Te Kauwae-a-Māui lies at the southern tip of Hawke's Bay on New Zealand's North Island, approximately 30 minutes from Napier and Hastings.

Getting There

- Fly into Auckland, then connect to Napier. From there, Te Awanga is a short drive and the departure point for most tours.

Access

- Overland access to the gannet colony is via guided tours with Gannet Safaris Overland, offering safe and direct entry to the clifftop sites.

When to Go

- Mid-September to May. Peak breeding activity occurs from November to January, while fledging takes place from late summer into autumn.

Check out these special subject publications



Aerial Photography Primer

A combination portfolio and how-to eBook on capturing and editing powerful aerial photographs. Includes advice on working from planes, camera settings and advice on post-production for producing incredible abstracts as well as stellar aerial scenics. 100 page. Read online or download to your device.



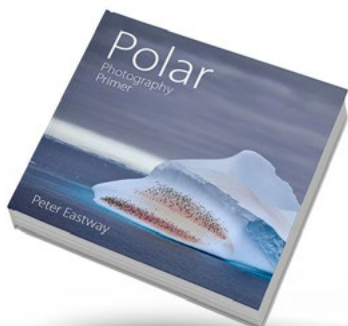
Studio Lighting - Portraiture

Studio Lighting for portrait photography contains a series of articles that ran in Better Photography magazine many years ago. (If you have a subscription to Better Photography, you'll find the articles in the archive stretching over 7 or 8 issues. This publication draws them all together, ready to read.) Read online or download to your device.



Travel Photography Primer

The Travel Photography Primer is a combination portfolio/how-to publication by Peter Eastway. In the Travel Photography Primer, Peter shares a range of incredibly useful ideas and tips that he has carefully gathered over 40 years of travelling the world, from how to capture great travel photographs to doing something meaningful with your photographs when you return home. It's full of practical advice and includes a portfolio of some of his favourite travel photographs as well. 100 pages. Read online or download to your device.



Polar Photography Primer

A combination portfolio and how-to eBook explaining how to make the most of your polar explorations, both north and south. Everything from protecting your equipment, handling exposures and then processing and presenting your work. 100 pages. Read online or download to your device.



The New Tradition - Digital

The The New Tradition is book all about photography, written especially for photographers. It comprises 100 of Peter Eastway's favourite photographs taken over the past 20 years or so, and tracing the development from film through to digital, the darkroom to Lightroom. Each photograph is accompanied by a small anecdote or fable, some are purely instructional, others quite humorous!

For full details, visit the Better Photography Education website.

www.betterphotographyeducation.com



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HOW TO ACHIEVE FOCUS

Most photographers today rarely consider how their camera focuses – until their photos are not focused! Understanding the basics of how an autofocus system works will give you the power to get more out of your camera.

With mobile phone cameras and even our wonderfully automated mirrorless camera bodies, focusing is generally handled both seamlessly and automatically. Modern autofocus systems work remarkably well.

However, there are situations when the focus isn't quite right. The camera might have focused on the wrong person in a group, on the ear instead of the eye in a portrait, or perhaps the camera struggles to focus at all on a flat subject like the sky.

For all its incredible technology, autofocus has limitations – and this is why an understanding of what's happening with our autofocus settings can help us troubleshoot a situation, or even better, set up our camera correctly in the first place.

Plane of Focus

It might sound obvious, but correctly focusing an image allows us to render our subject clearly. We call this 'sharp'. And as photography is a form of communication, it's important for our message to be clear.

However, correct focus is associated with depth-of-field. Depth-of-field is the area in front of and behind the plane of sharp focus. In theory, there is only one distance that can be focused upon and everything else is not focused. However, depth-of-field is a more pragmatic approach to what we perceive as being in sharp focus. Essentially, with our human eyesight and the medium we are using, if we cannot tell the difference between correct focus and almost correct focus, then we shouldn't worry.

Smaller format sensors, such as those in our phones, inherently have lots of depth-of-field, but a multitude of sins

are covered up because we usually look at our images on a very small screen. If you enlarge that image, you may find what appears sharp down small is actually blurred. But does it matter?

It doesn't matter if you only look at your photos on your phone or the rear LCD screen on your camera, but this doesn't apply to you! We all want our subjects correctly focused, so understanding depth-of-field is important. But first things first, we need to get our focus working properly and that's what this feature is about.

Lens Quality

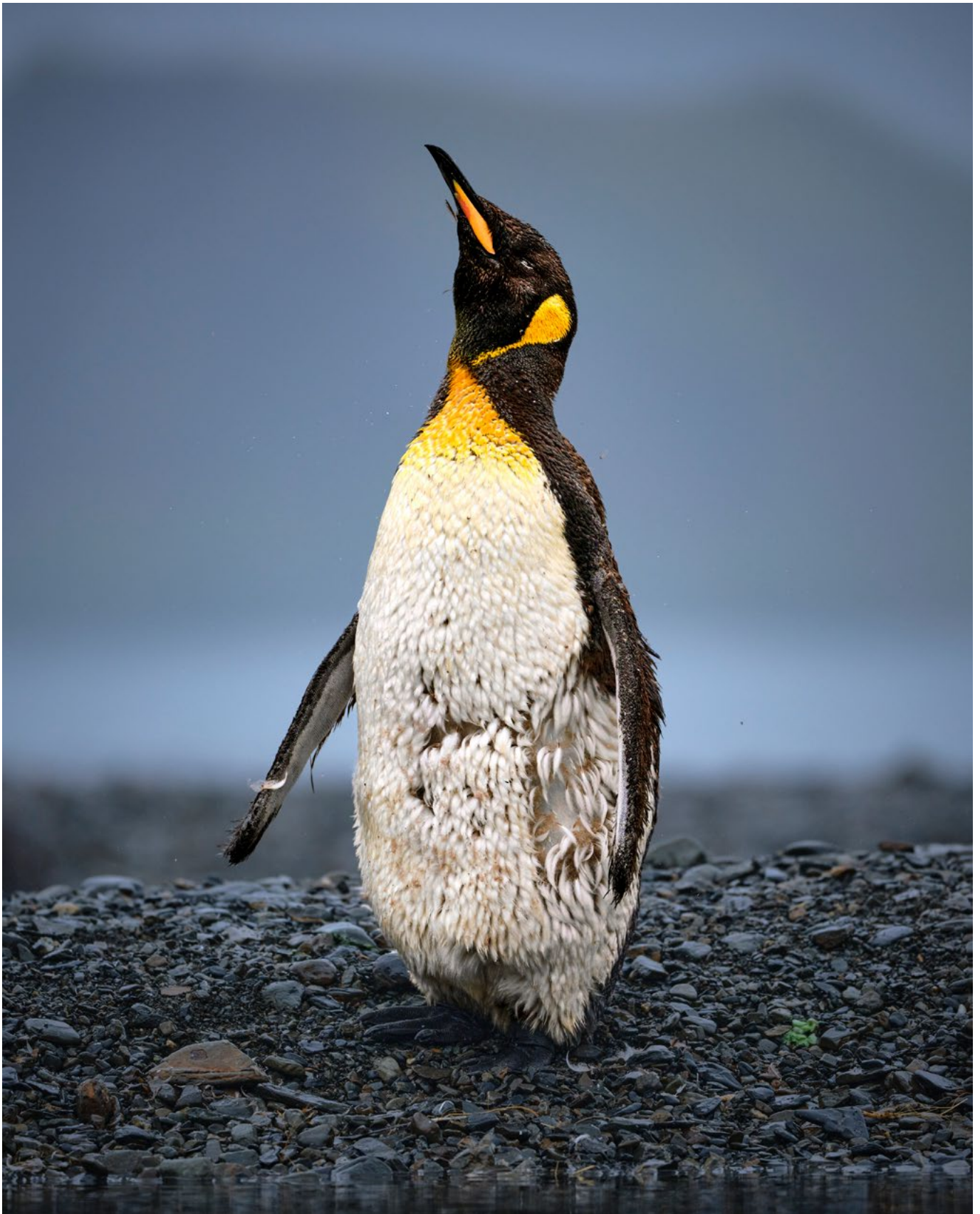
One other little side issue is the quality of your lenses. Generally speaking, the image quality on all modern cameras and lenses is excellent. However, two things to consider.

First, image quality changes depending on the aperture you select, a correctly focused image at f8 may look sharper and clearer than a correctly focused image at f1.4 or f32.

The reasons included lens design, material quality and diffraction, but all you need to take away just now is that there are differences.

Second, how sharp your subject appears depends on the camera and lens system you are using. Higher quality equipment will, in absolute terms, give you a sharper, clearer result, but there's no point worrying about this! All you can do is get the most out of the equipment you have – and that quality is more than needed anyway!

So, when we talk about focusing our photographs, let's see how we can help our cameras give us the best result, even in difficult situations.



Moulting King Penguin, Stromness, South Georgia. The subject has been correctly focused, meaning focus was on the eye. On the ground, you can see that the rocks are generally in focus as well, a product of depth-of-field, while the most distant rocks and the background exhibit increasing degrees of being out-of-focus. A telephoto lens was used which has inherently shallow depth-of-field – which is great to isolate your subject, but also easier to miss focus correctly.



Autofocus requires contrast to work. In this photograph, the dark vultures stand out starkly against the light clouds behind, making it easy for the AF system to operate.

HOW AUTOFOCUS WORKS

[The following articles are general in nature and written to give a broad overview. Some technical aspects may be overly simplified for which we beg your forgiveness.]

With mirrorless cameras, autofocus happens ‘on the imaging sensor’ which is the best approach. It means if the subject appears focused correctly when you are taking the photo, it will be focused correctly in the raw or JPEG file.

The sensor is multipurposing, delivering the image you see in the viewfinder or on the rear LCD screen, while relying on complex algorithms to determine the correct focus distance for your subject. It then sends directions to the camera and lens motors to set the focus appropriately.

Autofocus systems are fast and they are seamless for the majority of our photography. We don’t have to think about it most of the time, it just happens.

Old AF Systems

However, autofocus hasn’t always worked this way. If you have an older (and much loved) DSLR, there is usually a separate sensor inside the camera body designed expressly for autofocus. Unfortunately, using two sensors, one for autofocus and the other to capture the image, could result in alignment problems and out-of-focus results. On better cameras, you could fine-tune the autofocus system so it was in perfect alignment with the imaging sensor, but this is no longer required with a mirrorless design.

Older AF systems also suffered from slow speed and lag,

making them challenging for sport and wildlife photography. Today, even inexpensive mirrorless cameras are incredibly responsive and focusing appears instantaneous. But everything is relative. Focusing on the children at a party is straightforward compared to following focus on a lion chasing its prey and so the most advanced mirrorless cameras from Canon, Nikon, Fujifilm and Sony etc., are ‘beefed up’ to perform in nanoseconds!

Contrast Needed

One thing that hasn’t changed for all autofocus systems is the need for contrast in our subject.

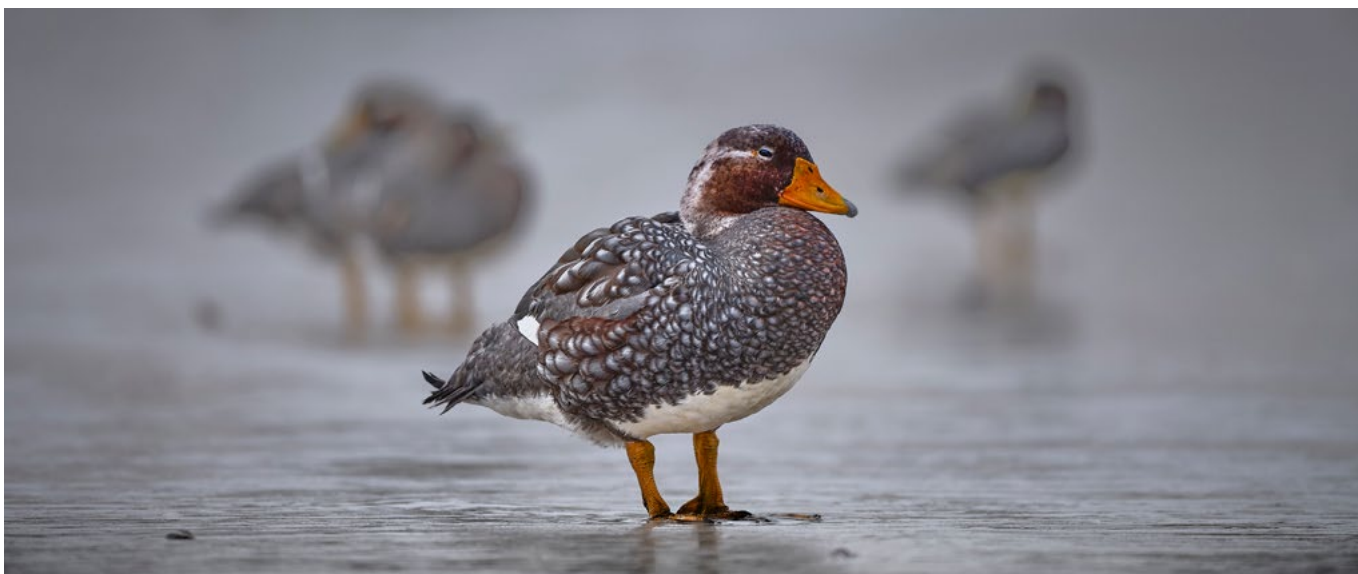
Point your camera at a clear blue sky and see if the autofocus system works? It won’t (unless you have also included some trees or foreground, in which case you’re cheating)!

All autofocus systems are looking for contrast edges. Your typical phone camera is taking photos of people and restaurant meals and these subjects have lots of edges.

In fact, most of our subjects do, but keep this need for contrast in mind because, if you do have problems, very often this is the cause.

Fortunately, the solution is often very easy. If your subject doesn’t have enough focus, point the camera at something the same distance away which does have contrast, hold the focus (usually by keeping the shutter button partially depressed), and return the camera to your subject to take the photo.

Contrast is essential for AF to work, but of course there are lots of other issues to consider – as we shall see.



Autofocus comes in different flavours. However, there's not much point worrying about it as the autofocus design is part and parcel of the camera you buy. So, don't worry about it too much, but at least understand what's happening! Steamer Ducks in the Falklands.

AUTOFOCUS SYSTEMS

It's true that autofocus systems need plenty of light in which to operate, but this doesn't mean autofocus systems can't work in the dark!

There are two broad categories of autofocus: **active** and **passive**.

In an active system, the camera emits a beam of (often infrared or red) light which bounces off the subject and back to a sensor on the camera, so it can determine the distance. This is a great solution for dark environments and when the subject is relatively close (within a few metres) of the camera. However, it's not much use for distant subject because the light isn't strong enough to bounce back effectively.

For more distant subjects (and in well lit environments), a passive system is used – and there are two main types of passive autofocusing: **Phase Detection AF** and **Contrast-Detection AF**.

The earlier phase detection systems used an array of tiny microlenses which split the light into a pair of images. The distance between these images was measured and the result used to drive the lens backwards or forwards to achieve correct focus. Phase Detection AF is considered very fast and accurate and is now handled by the imaging sensor itself. Different manufacturers have slightly different systems, but the principle remains the same.

Contrast Detection AF doesn't need separate microlenses, rather relying on measurements off the sensor and algorithms to 'probe' the subject while the lens changes focus rapidly. This backward and forward approach can be more accurate than Phase Detection AF, but it takes more time and so it's not very useful for action photography.

Most cameras have a third 'hybrid' system which switches automatically between Phase and Contrast Detection models.

Light Levels

One thing many photographers don't realise is that for an autofocus system to work at its best, it needs plenty of light. If there is too little light, focusing becomes erratic and inaccurate. The better (and more expensive) cameras have autofocus systems that need less light to perform correctly, whereas with a less expensive camera in the same situation, the autofocus simply doesn't work.

And how does your lens impact the autofocus system? Well, kit lenses with smaller maximum apertures won't work as well as larger aperture lenses in low light. It's true that with Auto ISO, we no longer need an f2.8 70-200mm lens at ISO 100, because an f4 70-200mm lens at ISO 200 will work just as well. There will be differences in the bokeh (out-of-focus blur), of course, but often what is not considered is that autofocus will keep operating longer when lighting conditions are dropping. And similarly, when you add a tele-extender in, you're losing one or two EV (exposure values) of light and so the AF system may not work as well (or at all in some situations).

Now, to further complicate matters, you might think the wider the aperture, the better the autofocus system can work, but as the maximum aperture increases in size, so do the lens elements and mechanisms, which can require more effort to focus quickly if not accurately. Fortunately, these issues are generally resolved with current camera and lens designs – and if there's an issue, it's not one we can do anything about if we want to use the lens for other reasons.



Use the AF points to tell the autofocus system what to focus on. The original scene was very hazy with very little contrast and the AF system struggled, so a single AF point was selected and placed over the edge of the island where the most contrast lay. (The contrast has been changed in editing.)

HOW AUTOFOCUS POINTS WORK

It's all very well to have an autofocus system, but what is it actually focusing on? We're probably focusing on the subject of our photograph, but how do we tell the camera what that subject is?

Originally, this was a very important question, but with subject recognition autofocus, maybe the camera really does know what you want to focus on, based on the direction you're pointing the camera, but let's take a step back.

The first autofocus systems had a single point in the middle of the frame with which you focused. This then expanded to three and now you can have over 1000 autofocus points covering 100 per cent of the image area. So, we can use autofocus points to tell the camera what to focus on.

Focus Point Types

As technology has improved, there is less of an emphasis on the number and type of autofocus points as even entry level mirrorless cameras are extremely well equipped.

An autofocus point can be seen in your viewfinder as a small open or empty square. On some cameras, they may have an even smaller square dot for very precise focusing. However, behind this square is an autofocus sensor and the idea is to place this square over the subject you want to focus on. We very often use single autofocus points to give us full control over what we are focusing on.

Of course, in the real world there can be many subjects that could be focused upon, or you might not be able to accurately place a single autofocus point over your subject. The solution is

to have more than one autofocus point and most cameras have tens if not hundreds.

As mentioned before, autofocus requires contrast to operate correctly and autofocus sensors come in three varieties: vertical, horizontal and cross-type. Each is designed to look for a contrast edge in your subject and the less expensive designs look for either vertical or horizontal lines, but not both. The more expensive cross-type sensor picks up contrast edges on multiple axes.

However, today the type of sensor doesn't seem so important because creating cross-type sensors is no longer so expensive and/or there are so many AF sensors being used, if one doesn't grab focus another one nearby will. In practice, all the autofocus systems work remarkably well, but for special purpose work (such as sport and wildlife), there's no doubt the more sophisticated and expensive autofocus systems have taken the technology of autofocusing to nearly instantaneous perfection!

More Speed

Obviously, for a camera to check 1000 autofocus points and work out which is the best one to use, will take more time than a camera just checking one or nine autofocus points.

For this reason, most cameras allow you to limit the size of the autofocus area (the matrix of autofocus points) and the number point inside. Refer to your camera manual for more information about what your particular camera is capable of and, if you feel you need more responsiveness in your AF system, this might be one of the keys.



You need Continuous AF mode for moving subjects. As this albatross flew towards the camera, not only was the AF system following focus, it was predicting where the subject would be a fraction of a second after the shutter button was pressed and the photo actually exposed. The technology is simply amazing!

CHOOSING THE RIGHT AF MODE

It can be a little confusing to talk about 'autofocus modes' because there are quite a few options to choose from. However, when it comes to turning on your camera and adjusting the autofocus mode, we are selecting between three or four options: single shot, continuous AF, (maybe) Hybrid AF and manual focus.

It can be very important to select the right mode when either you or your subject is moving, less important if you and your subject are stationary, but best to get it right. Selecting the AF mode should become an automatic habit as soon as you turn on your camera.

Single Shot

With single shot AF, the autofocus system searches for and finds correct focus – and then stops for as long as you keep pressure on the focus button. The focus is not adjusted further unless you take the photo or take the pressure off the focus button completely.

Single shot is the most appropriate mode for focusing on stationary subjects when you are also stationary. Once you have found correct focus, there is no need to find it again.

Continuous AF

In real life, it is rare for both you and your subject to be fully stationary. Usually, you as the photographer are moving around in a landscape, or even for a portrait shoot, your subject can be moving a little backwards and forwards as they sit for the camera.

When you touch the shutter or AF button and apply a little pressure (half-press), the camera starts focusing. When it finds focus, it immediately repeats the process so it is continually

looking for sharp focus. In this way, if the distance between your camera and your subject changes, the camera will always have correct focus.

If you and your subject are stationary, then continuous AF isn't necessary but, in theory, the system will still have correct focus. In practice, from time to time some continuous AF systems seem to confuse themselves and may actually provide an out-of-focus setting. This is why we turn it off if it's not needed.

So, why do we need continuous AF? Imagine you are photographing a car coming towards you. You half-press the shutter button and the camera finds focus. Then a split second later, you fully depress the shutter button and take the photo, but in that split second, the car has moved closer to the camera and is now out-of-focus! This is why Continuous AF systems are so useful – they are continuously finding (and even predicting) focus so there is as little lag between finding focus and taking the exposure as possible.

Hybrid AF

Some cameras have a Hybrid AF system which simply sets the camera to Continuous AF unless it thinks both the camera and the subject are stationary, in which case it switches to Single Shot AF – until such time it determines the camera or the subject is on the move again.

Manual Focus

Manual focus is still available for all cameras, although sometimes the lens is focused with buttons rather than a focusing collar. It's an essential backup!



Is back-button autofocus the way to go? Personally, I have returned to shutter button focusing, especially when using subject AF modes which locate the subject for me (most of the time).

ADVANCED AUTOFOCUSING

Most cameras combine the shutter button (to take the photo) with the autofocus control. It makes sense because everytime you take a photograph, you first need to make sure your subject is in sharp focus.

However, some photographers like to separate the picture taking and the focusing. They do this by allocating the autofocus function to a different button – usually a button underneath the right thumb or the middle finger. In this way, they can focus the camera separately from taking the photo.

Focus And Recompose

With back-button focusing, some photographers feel it is easier to focus on the subject first with the back-button, recompose the frame and then take the photograph – without the camera focusing again when pressing the shutter button.

Of course, usually you can also do this by half-pressing the shutter button to acquire focus and then, keeping the shutter button half-depressed, hold the focus until you reframe and take your photo.

If you have your camera on a tripod shooting a stationary subject, with back-button focusing you can take multiple shots without the camera refocusing for each shot. For instance, if you're shooting a panorama stitch, the camera risks refocusing to a different point as you turn the camera for each exposure, which would be a problem when stitching the shots together. Of course, you could also use single shot AF to acquire focus and then switch the AF off while you take your photographs.

As autofocus has improved, especially with subject detection, the argument for back-button focus is perhaps

not as strong as it used to be, but there's no doubt many photographers swear by it. So the best advice is to try it – it's certainly a valid approach to capturing your images. Check your camera manual for details.

One other thing. With the different ways we can customise the buttons on our cameras, consider setting them up to automatically set the camera to different focusing approaches, where appropriate. For instance, most cameras have several modes for following different types of subjects – a custom button could be a quick and easy way to change the selection during a shoot.

Autofocus Inaccuracy

You might think your camera focuses correctly every time, or that if you're focusing on the same subject, the focus setting would always be the same. This is not necessarily correct, but it's usually not a problem with our 20 to 50-megapixel sensors because the differences are so slight they can't be seen, or they are covered up by depth-of-field.

However, as you move into higher resolution sensors, longer telephoto lenses or closer macro lenses (where detail is magnified), you may discover small but important differences in the focusing, even when both camera and subject are stationary.

We won't go into the technical reasons for this, but suffice to say there can be differences in focusing from activation to activation. Autofocus is not always as precise a science as we are led to believe.

So, if you are wondering about the focusing accuracy on some subjects, take multiple frames and one of them may have better focus than the others.



Subject recognition is fantastic – as long as you have contrast. The AF system easily located the albatross and then, even better, found its eye. AF has changed the way wildlife photographers work!

SUBJECT AUTOFOCUS

It can be argued that subject recognition autofocus is a form of artificial intelligence. And it's no surprise that modern cameras are able to use this as human facial recognition technology must now be approaching 50-years-old!

When it comes to facial recognition, all cameras with subject recognition allow you to focus automatically on the eyes of a person. Some cameras will also allow you to choose which eye the system focuses on - the left or the right, the front or the rear. For portrait photographers, this is really useful, especially when using wide-aperture lenses where the depth-of-field is so shallow that only one eye can be kept in sharp focus. By combining Continuous AF with facial recognition AF, you get beautifully sharp and clear eyes with that wonderful background blur.

Subject recognition has moved past just the human face and now includes animals, birds, cars, planes - depending on the camera manufacturer. It really is dumbing down the picture-taking process, but in a good way. Most readers are getting older and so autofocus can assist our ageing eyesight! In fact, I prefer to rely on autofocus, even compared with manual focusing on the LCD screen at 100% magnification. But that might just be me.

For wildlife and sport photographers, subject recognition has transformed how we photograph our subjects, giving us many more successful results. Take bird photography for example.

In The Air

Subject focusing on birds can be especially useful, depending on the design of the camera's AF system. Imagine photographing a

bird from the side as it flies past you. Using area autofocus, most AF systems will generally find the bird easily enough (assuming you are doing your part), but like all autofocus systems, it is designed to focus on the closest part of the object to the camera and in the case of a bird, this is the tip of its outstretched wing. The result is a sharp wing and a blurred eye – not what we want.

Old-timer wildlife photographers will tell us that they achieved precise focus manually, but they never enlarged their films the way we inspect our digital files and so I guess they weren't always as accurate as they thought they were!

However, even taking a 'manual approach' with autofocus by using a single AF point and placing it over the eye of a bird as it flies by, is incredibly challenging.

There's no doubt this technique can work in theory, but in practice I'd suggest it is still difficult and you will have more fails than wins!

More Success

Now introduce subject recognition autofocus. The camera recognises the shape of the bird and so we are almost guaranteed it will be in sharp focus. Even better, many autofocus systems also search for the bird or animal's eye, which is a fantastic outcome.

Now, when you're standing on a moving ship photographing birds as they sweep past. With a long telephoto lens, it's still a challenge, but if you can keep your subject within the frame long enough for the AF system to lock in its focus, the results can be startlingly good!



Original raw files. Phase One (left), Fujifilm GFX (right).

HIGH RESOLUTION COMPROMISES

On the one hand, there is no denying the image quality, but on the other hand, can you obtain that same image quality with another camera? Peter Eastway muses on the benefits of both the Phase One IQ and Fujifilm GFX systems.

This is not a scientifically or technically verified comparison. It's also not a choice many photographers will face, but just like car magazines and websites talk about vehicles we will never own or drive, I thought it interesting to discuss the leaders of large format digital imaging as they stand today.

Phase One IQ4

Phase One is the only camera manufacturer offering a 150-megapixel sensor, but the pixel count is only part of the story. While you can certainly make large prints from Phase One files, just as important (or perhaps more importantly) is the dynamic range and the sensor's ability to record fine detail.

Of course, the sensor can only record what is delivered to it by the lens and here Phase One teams up with two German master craftspeople, Schneider Kreuznach and Rodenstock, depending on which camera system you're using. The Phase One IQ4 150-megapixel back is detachable and can be used with both its XF reflex viewfinder camera and the XT technical camera (no separate viewfinder).

Some people will argue the lenses on the XT are superior to those on the XF, but for me (and I own both systems), all these lenses are simply sensational. They are crisp, sharp and retain an unprecedented amount of detail.

Fujifilm GFX

The GFX100S II that I use is a 100-megapixel camera, so fewer pixels, but more than your average full-frame camera. And it's not as physically large as the Phase One sensor either, being around 1.7x a full-frame.

But like the Phase One, there's something special about the files the GFX produces.

There are two 100-megapixel models and both have the same sensor and provide the same image quality. The main differences are in operational features like the viewfinder's LCD resolution, buffer and some video specs.

For lenses, Fujifilm has a wonderful set of Fujinon lenses from a 20-35mm wide-angle to a 500mm telephoto with a 1.4x converter.

However, unlike the Phase One cameras, it has a mirrorless design just like its smaller-format X series cameras (and those from Canon, Nikon and Sony etc.). In terms of ease of use, this is a huge plus.

Pros And Cons

In my view, there's no doubt the Fujifilm camera is easier to use. The system is more convenient and more versatile.

It is also quicker and more responsive than the Phase One, but in the same way, it is slower and less responsive than high-



Shipwreck, New Island, Falklands – Phase One file.

When you compare this with the image on the next page, look at the level of detail in the rusted metal. There is so much more to be found in the Phase One file – but at what price?



end Canon, Nikon, Sony and even its own Fujifilm X cameras.

In the field, this means the Fujifilm offers a number of advantages over the Phase One, especially for travel, wildlife and sport photography.

First, the autofocus is faster and includes subject detection which can work extremely well. The Phase One XF does not offer this and has just three AF sensors in the middle of the frame.

To be fair, the XF is not designed as a wildlife or sport camera and its 240mm lens (even with its matched 2x converter) simply can't match the Fujifilm's 500mm and 1.4x converter for getting in close to your subject.

The GFX can also power through 7 frames per second, while the Phase One in practice struggles to offer a little more than one frame per second. Now, if you only shoot wildlife, you won't be buying a GFX as there are other cameras that provide better autofocus and frame rates, but we're talking about high resolution compromises and comparing it with the Phase One. The Fujifilm wins.

The GFX is also smaller and lighter as a package, making it more suitable for travel photography and when you press the shutter, it's a little less obtrusive (noisy) than the Phase One XF.

My understanding is the Phase One XF system was primarily designed with studio photography in mind, but it's certainly been used for wildlife and sport photography as well. Indeed, I won the AIPP's 2019 Australian Professional Nature Photographer of the Year with a portfolio that included three photos taken with the Phase One XF. So it is certainly possible to take great nature photos with this system, but what this sentence doesn't address is the types of photos you can't take.

Having photographed Antarctica many times with Phase One equipment, using the Fujifilm GFX has expanded the type of photos I can confidently take, but there is a compromise.

Image Quality

In this article are two full-page detail photos of the same subject photographed at much the same time, in much the same way. Peter Wiederholt used his Phase One XF IQ4/150 with a 35mm Schneider lens and exposure averaging for his long exposure. I shot a similar scene with my Fujifilm GFX100S II, a 20-35mm Fujinon zoom and an ND filter for 30 seconds.

I concede that there is a chance both our cameras could have moved during the exposures which could explain some differences, plus we're comparing a prime lens with a zoom, but this article is prompted by viewing many files and just revelling in the superior detail of a Phase One capture. That same level of detail is not found in the Fujifilm files.

Now, as an aside, when I compare my GFX files with, say, my Fujifilm X series files, the same observation can be made. And similarly, other photographers have noted how crisp and clean the Fujifilm GFX files are in comparison to their Canon, Nikon and Sony files. This is to be expected because we're comparing 100-megapixels to 50-megapixels, and 150- to 100-megapixels in this article.

However, it's more than just resolution, it's a level of detail and tonality that is a step above. I compared hundreds of files taken over the course of a recent excursion to Antarctica and the Phase One files remain the winner, but at what cost?

There are two costs involved, financial and opportunity. I'm redefining 'opportunity cost' to mean the types of photos and the subjects that I couldn't photograph adequately with the

Phase One, but which are so easy for the Fujifilm. I have Fujifilm files that the Phase One did not and could not capture – and that was a benefit and a compromise for me.

System Prices

Let's look at what I have in my Phase One XF system: a 28mm (equivalent), 55mm, 80mm, 110mm, 240mm and 2x converter. Based on internet research, the current price is around AUS \$130,000.

For most photographers, this is like buying a Ferrari - it's simply not going to happen because, unless you are super passionate or a little bit obsessed, there are many other things competing for our disposable income. Or our superannuation fund!

In comparison, my Fujifilm outfit is much more affordable. I have two Fujifilm GFX100S II bodies, 20-35mm, 55mm, 80mm, 100-200mm, 500mm and 1.4x converter, which on the House of Fujifilm website retails around \$39,000.

That's a difference of around \$90,000. That's a lot!

Balancing Adjustments

There are two questions we need to ask. We might as well ask the question about price first because, for most photographers, the improvement in quality you get with the higher price is not going to be visible to most people. Why? Because at the end of the day, how do we share and exhibit our photographs? If we post on social media, that's a 1080-pixel image on Instagram. If we produce a photo book or a large print, how many people will know, really?

The rest of the world has caught up in terms of quality - all cameras provide great quality so both Phase One and Fujifilm have to justify their higher prices. The difference in a top-end Canon or Nikon outfit and the GFX outfit may not be that big, but the jump to a Phase One system is huge.

And the second question? What are we shooting? If it's travel and wildlife, then the Phase One camera is not as versatile as the Fujifilm GFX, no matter the price. On the other hand, if it's wilderness and landscape, then there's no arguing the quality differential, but stepping back to the first question, will the benefits reflect the cost differential?

Conclusion

I'm in the fortunate position of having acquired my Phase One outfit over a number of years and while I am now using the Fujifilm GFX100S II on many of my photo tours and workshops, I have no intention of dismissing my Phase One kit just yet. There are times when, while I don't need the extra quality of a Phase One file, I want it for the sense of satisfaction it gives me. I like using the best equipment and achieving the best possible technical result. It's a part of my photographic style.

With the same reasoning, I upgraded from the Fujifilm X-T5 to the GFX100S II not because I needed more than 40-megapixels, but because I wanted to capture 100-megapixels. I love larger files. It adds to my enjoyment of photography.

When someone asks should they buy a Phase One system, I say yes. But, if someone asks should they buy a Fujifilm GFX instead of a Phase One system, the equation is complicated by the huge price differential and the greater versatility of the Fujifilm system for many genres of photography.

It's a first world problem.



Shipwreck, New Island, Falklands - Fujifilm GFX file.

You might need to look closely to see the difference – and if so, you can safely save your money. On the other hand, as good as this file is, it doesn't match the quality achieved on the Phase One system.



LUMEN PRINTING

Roger Skinner attends a workshop with Judith Nangala Crispin and is inspired by her approach to the technique of lumen printing.

Lumen printing has its origins back in the 1830s, when Henry Fox Talbot developed a method of creating 'photogenic drawings' by placing leaves and lace directly onto paper sensitised with salt and silver nitrate, exposing them to sunlight to create a silhouetted image. Lumen printing can also be considered similar to the cyanotypes of Thomas Wedgwood and Sir John Herschel.

In contemporary Australia, probably the premier exponent of this artform is Judith Nangala Crispin (we have four of her prints in our private collection) and when I saw she was doing a three-day workshop at the Hill End Analogue Festival, I enrolled.

The workshop went for an hour each day which allowed us to lay out our objects on a piece of 20x16" paper and leave them

to be exposed to light over two-and-a-half days.

This 'exposure' time can be varied according to whim and I have found different papers perform differently as well. For instance, the Ilford papers appear to be quite stable and slow to work, whereas Fotospeed paper is much more volatile and twenty minutes or so is sufficient time to achieve a satisfactory image.

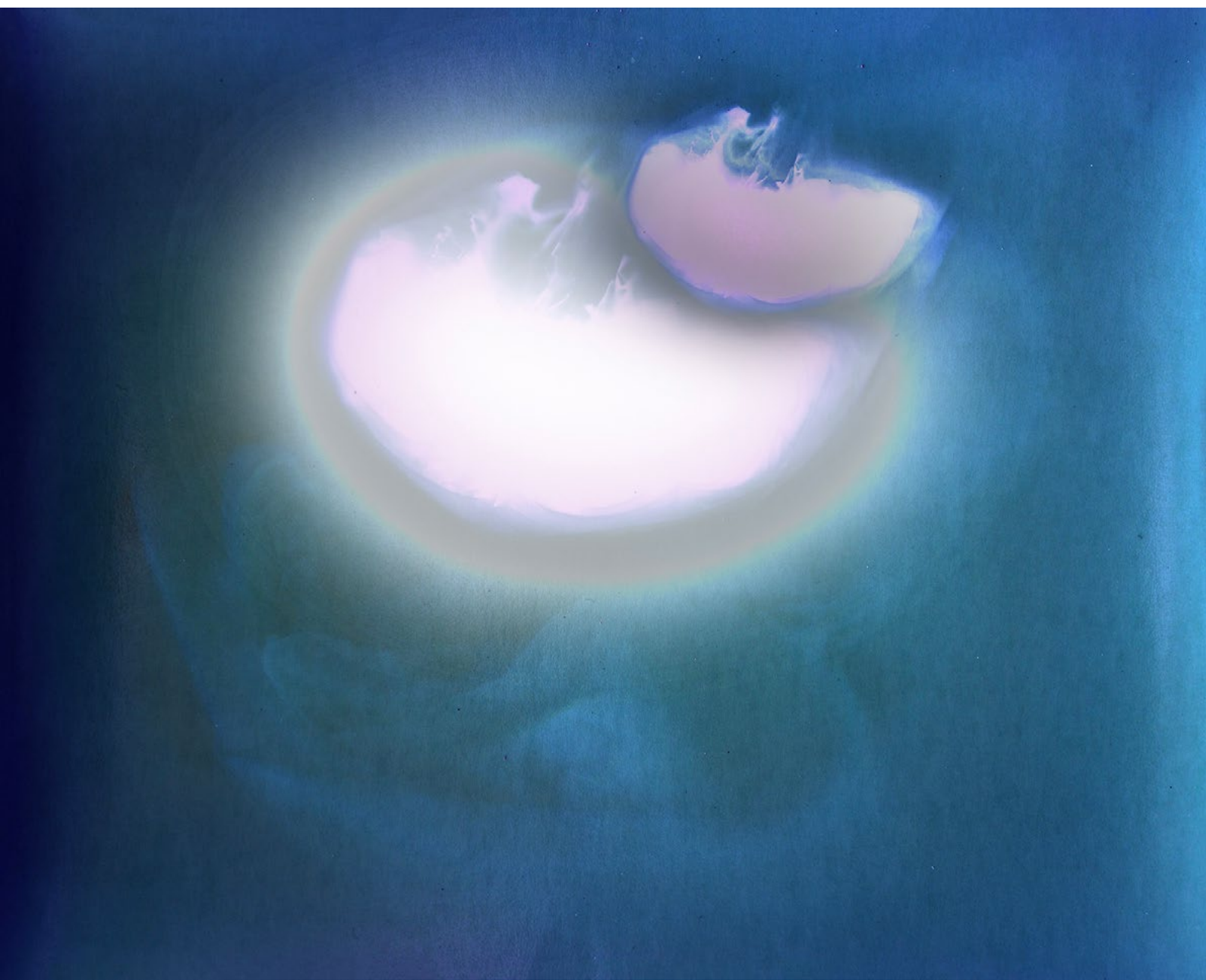
Leaving aside all the philosophical discussions for a moment, a lumen print is made very simply by placing objects on top of a piece of silver gelatin paper and exposing it to sunlight. Additional layers of complexity can be added by considering what type of objects are going to be placed on the paper. Botanicals are a great place to start as they are generally close at hand and some actually react with the paper, plus the addition of other reactive



Judith (on the left) explains the links to country that come directly from lumen prints.



Lumen print being created in the studio, in this case under glass so the materials won't be disturbed.



Cover: from Roger's calender: Illuminated Embryo.



The original layout of my work created in the workshop, titled 'The Colonial Garden'. It was disrupted before the exposure was completed. The final version is on the page opposite.



Native Rat in decay, day four.



August: Colonial Garden – the original scan of the exposed print.

materials such as coffee, Vegemite and turmeric are especially effective. Judith is well known for the addition of dead animals on the paper and they become the hero of her works.

After a successful exposure time has been made, the materials are removed from the paper which is then scanned or photographed and filed.

At Judith's workshop, my layout of botanicals, gathered from the colonial gardens planted around the old hospital, was destroyed sometime during the night of the second day when it was blown away! Materials used were leaves, seed pods, dried petals, mouse and bird poo.

On the final day of the workshop, the big reveal took place when Judith scanned everyone's works. There were some really interesting results. My scan looks a little different to the original design because, after my reconstruction, I added hand cleaner, diluted in water and dripped onto the paper.

In Practice

Enthused after the workshop, I wanted to make more lumen prints. I disappeared into my darkroom searching for packets of fibre-based printing paper. However, through further research, I realised any silver gelatin paper will work, as will lithographic film and I had tons of it! Most of my supply is well beyond its use-by date, but this doesn't seem to matter.

Opposite: August: Colonial Garden Submergent – the final rendition after editing in Photoshop. The strappy leaves in the centre are from a shot of the lumen print during its creation.





Dead Naked Ladies, a twenty minute exposure to afternoon light with sap smear.



Antares and Oli Playing in the Grasstree Wind with Flowers.

"Begin with the end in mind," said Stephen Covey. So I began making prints for my 2026 calendar. I produce a calendar each year which I give to friends and associates and a set of lumen prints seemed to be ideal material for my next one.

I made a series of prints, experimenting with different ideas, and had the resulting prints scanned. Then after a break of a couple of weeks, I ventured with them into Photoshop. Here I used some pretty far-out manipulations, finding myself in unfamiliar areas of the program that I seldom use, but I was happy to be on a journey without maps.

The process provided a huge learning exercise, but I didn't stop to document any processes. In some cases, I combined photographs I made of the lumen print with the scan and manipulated both (see August). I would work on the original scan and then save what I had made and then go back and start over on the same scan (see Cover).

The calendar was greeted with surprise and congratulations from the folks who were "lucky" enough to get one, which was most gratifying. And one associate bought three prints!

Since making the calendar I have continued making lumen prints concentrating on the use of botanicals, leaving the dead animals to Judith.

Further links:

<https://judithcrispin.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2zXypdzB8A>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10CBe1qZKtM>

Opposite: Lloyd's Vision. For Lloyd Rees who, as he grew older, slowly lost his sight and his paintings intensified. This work was laid down on the studio floor in November 2025 and then lifted and scanned in February 2026 and is of a rose bloom.



Roses in Pink

BUSHFIRE



AFTERMATH

NATURE'S RESILIENCE & TENACITY



Yin and Yang

This image captures the indiscriminate force of flames consuming farmland on the outskirts of Alexandra in northeast Victoria. Fire embodies complementary yet opposing forces upon the land, shaping the complex dynamics of the wildfire. There is an undeniable interconnectedness because the fire could not exist without the fuel of dry grasses, dense shrubs and bushland. Yet Nature reveals a paradox: while fire can devastate, it also renews. It stimulates biodiversity, clears old growth and promotes regeneration. Perhaps Nature's preference lies in balance – in the traditional land management practices that reduce fuel loads and prevent the escalation of high-intensity destructive wildfires.



Lisa Leach shares a project that records locations near her home in Victoria, recently scorched by fire.

In January 2026, the state of Victoria was battered by some of the most destructive bush fires in recent memory, fuelled by record temperatures, erratic winds and dry conditions that pushed the fire danger to catastrophic levels. The blaze tore through hundreds of thousands of hectares, destroyed homes and farms, led to at least one fatality and triggered major

Battle Scars

The trees at the bushland, Cottons Pinch, stand like silent veterans of a brutal campaign. Each trunk carries the battle scars of the ferocious bushfire. The soil beneath them is a carpet of soot and fallen branches, reduced to brittle relics. Yet even amongst their ruin, there is a quiet defiance as life lingers under the bark, their roots continue to grip the earth and the first green shoots are visibly pushing through the blackened soil.

emergency responses across the state. The unprecedented scale and ferocity of the fires underscored the escalating fire risk in a warming climate.

The highways and townships reopened in the weeks that followed, revealing a haunting beauty. I walked with my camera, feeling a quiet apprehension that other people might view the act of documenting the aftermath as insensitive. Careful to centre Mother Nature's tenacity and resilience, I deliberately avoided any homes and property that had been destroyed or damaged. What struck me most was the sight of new greenery pushing through the scorched earth, while the smoky scent that lingered in the air spoke to how recently the flames had passed.

Landscape photography for me, is an intentional act of slowing down and stepping beyond the rhythm of everyday life. It invites me to observe more closely, to reconnect with the natural world and to find meaning in the quiet moments of shifting light, changing weather and the understated beauty within ordinary places. Through the following images, I aimed to preserve not only how a landscape appeared following the devastating bushfires, but how it felt to stand within it.



Survivor

This image captures the immense scale, ferocity and destructiveness of the bushfires. Multiply this single scene across hundreds of thousands of hectares of scorched landscape and the magnitude of the event becomes almost unimaginable. Yet intriguingly, within the devastation there remains the occasional untouched tree or isolated patch of land – a quiet testament to the unpredictable behaviour of fire and the resilience woven into the natural environment.



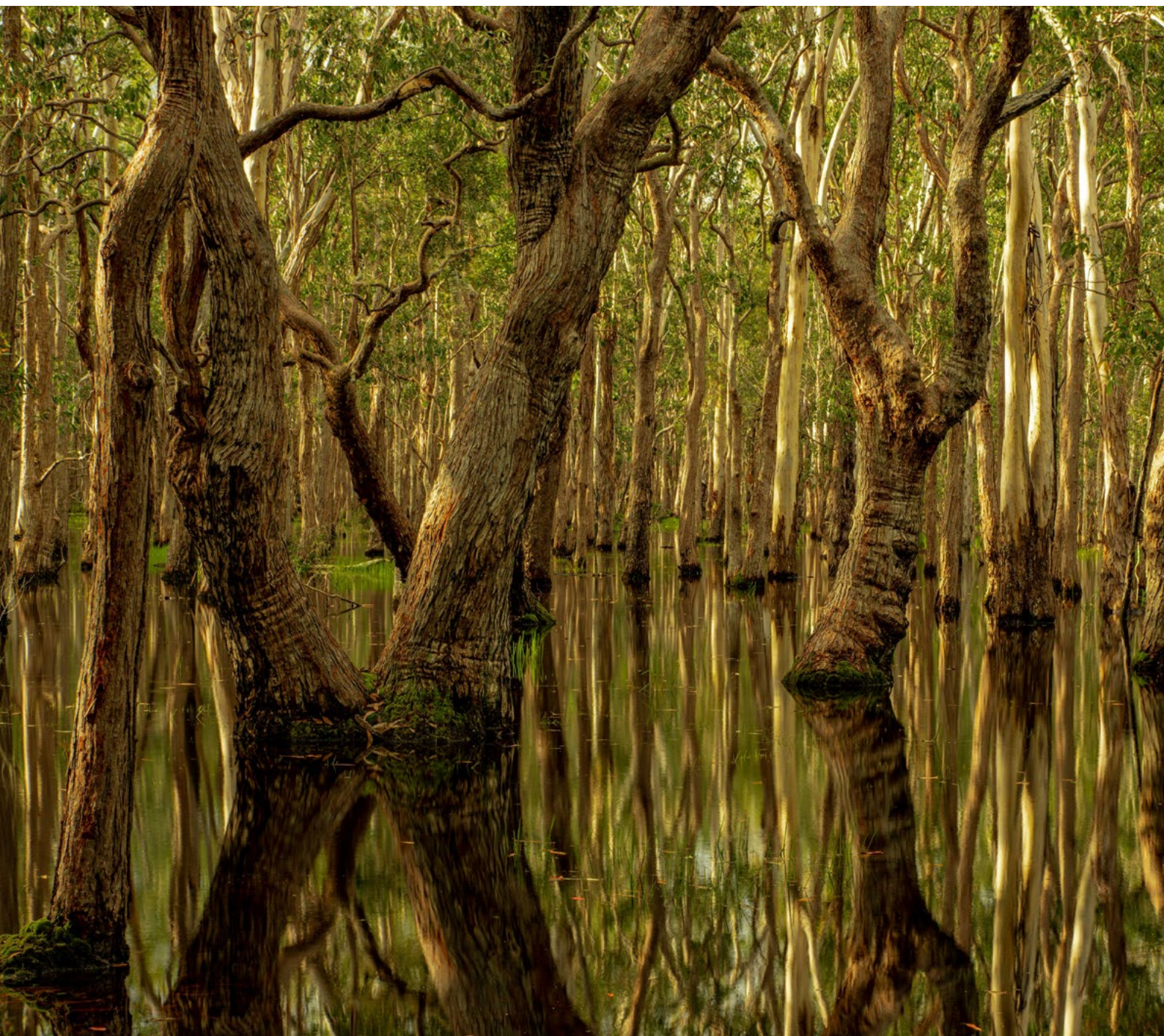
Sentinels

The wildfires tore through the shrubs and bushland known as Cottons Pinch. Guarding their station, the scorched custodians of the bush stand tall in apparent defiance of the blaze. Though just metres from the main highway to Melbourne, an eerie post-battle silence hangs among the trees, resting now, as if contemplating their next act of regeneration. The toasted leaves, brittle and darkened, give the landscape the false impression of autumn rather than an aftermath, waiting to begin the slow, deliberate work of renewal.



Fortify

This image demonstrates the scorched and blackened earth stretched in a jagged arc up to the firebreak – a deliberate line carved and defended by the volunteers of the County Fire Authority. On one side, the land lays charred and bare; grasses reduced to brittle ash and the air still heavily scented with smoke and heat. Beyond the firebreak, however, the landscape shifts abruptly – untouched, almost unaware of the destruction halted only metres away. A boundary. A human-made line in the soil between devastation and preservation.



JUMPING INTO SHADOWS AND CROUCHING IN PUDDLES

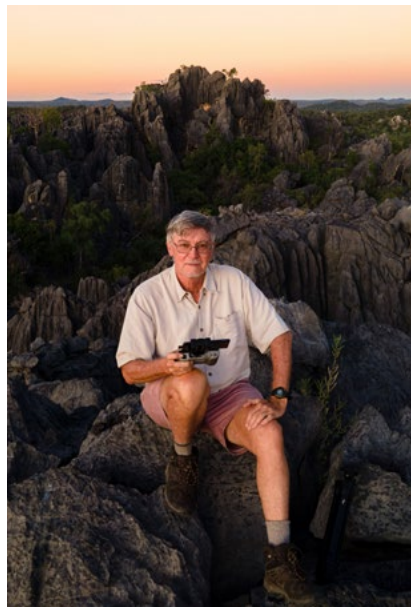


Reflections



Shadow details

STYLE IN PHOTOGRAPHY



Paul Curtis

What is style? How do you find it?

Can you create it? Some thoughts and suggestions from Paul Curtis.

Louise Denton, a Northern Territory photographer whose 'style' I can appreciate, was interviewed in a photographic magazine and asked whether she thought she had her own style; to which she replied, "I don't think I do, but I've been told I do. It's hard to see your own style."

I took something away from that conversation. It got me thinking about my own style; do I have one, are my shots and subjects repetitive or thematic, am I taking the same shot over and over again, does everyone have their own in-built photographic style and does it evolve? So, after assembling many of my favourite images for my revised website, I had the opportunity for some introspection.

New Directions

What is a favourite image and collectively do they have common traits? I created a folder called 'Paul's photographic clichés' (in my typical self-deprecating style) and started to assemble suitable images as I came across them. This was to see if I had evolved as a photographer over the last 40 years, was I just repeating myself as new technologies came along and do I consciously push myself in new directions?

Curious, I recently asked this question of some fellow photographers who I have been shooting with for decades and asked them to be brutally honest in their opinions. Some words came from that conversation which I will take as complimentary – unconventional, prolific and freestyling! I think I know what

**Jumping into shadows****Rule of thirds**

they are getting at and I probably agree. I am a bit of a product of my environment. I live in far north Queensland and am surrounded by lush rainforests, hundreds of waterfalls and golden tropical beaches. I came to the north in the mid-eighties and I developed a goal of having the best wilderness portfolio of this part of the world. Having travelled around Australia a bit, I found it challenging to adapt my habits and style to the incredibly different landscapes, colours and subjects. This more or less forced me to move away from my familiar subjects, angles and camera techniques.

Over all those years and locations, I think a certain style has developed and I can attribute that development to certain things I do. So I started to write them down. The following is a list of practices I believe makes me who and what I am when I pick up a camera. Some readers may relate to these things, while others may strongly disagree, but I guess that's where the 'unconventional' and 'freestyling' terms come in to play.

This is not a lesson in photography, but a combination of ideas I have chosen which are used to capture images that appeal to my eye. I have called this – Paul's List of Photographic Truisms (According to Paul) and they relate mainly to my chosen field of landscape and outdoors photography.

Paul's List of Photographic Truisms (According to Paul)

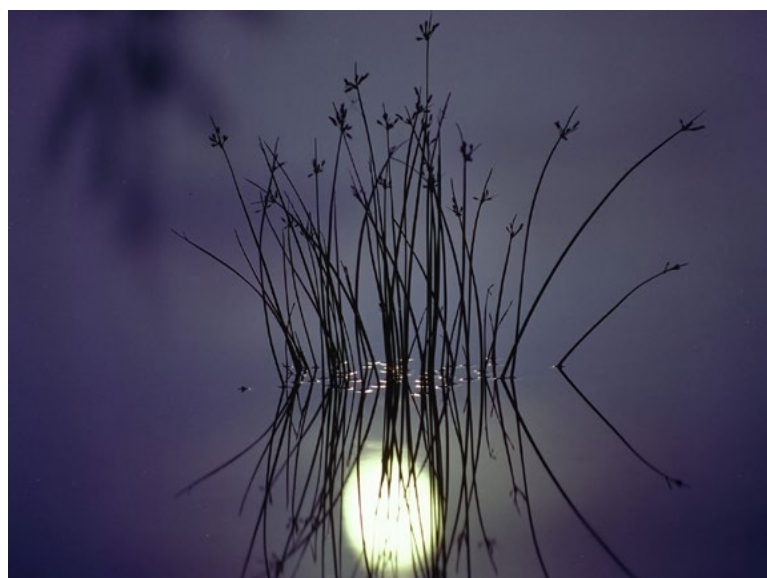
- Shoot like there is no tomorrow. Maybe there isn't. Never assume that you will return and do it right or better. Take every opportunity when you are at a location to do your best



Jumping into shadows

and return with something. I think this is where the prolific bit comes in. I don't dwell for a long time on a single scene, but move on quickly to others.

- Throw away your tripod – whenever you can. Of course there are situations where you absolutely need one, but tripods can be a great stifler of creativity. If there is the slightest likelihood of a scene or subject disappearing, shoot from the hip. Dial up your ISO, enable all camera and lens anti-vibration and grab those shots. Once you have something in the bag, then pull out the tripod if you are not happy with what you have already. Tripods are sometimes restrictive in the angles you can place them and stop you from moving about freely to obtain the best shot, particularly with rapidly changing subjects as are often presented to me. Henri Cartier-Bresson allegedly said, “Sharpness is a bourgeois concept.” (Love it!) While on the subject of quotes, another of my favourites is from street photographer Arthur Fellig (Weegee) whose mantra was, “F8 and be there.” That goes with that other popular saying, that the world’s best camera is the one in your hand. Probably where my ‘freestyling’ moniker came from!
- Just because an image is crisp and super sharp doesn't make it a good picture (see quote above).
- My first rule of photography is that there should be no rules. As I see it, rules are guidelines for novices first venturing



Moonlight reflection

into photography. There are many guidelines like the Rule of thirds, but an ability to (quickly) compose a good shot is something you have – or not. I can usually determine the ideal shot on my arrival at a location in a few seconds. You can learn from practice and others, but ultimately everyone sees things differently for the better or worse. Have you ever



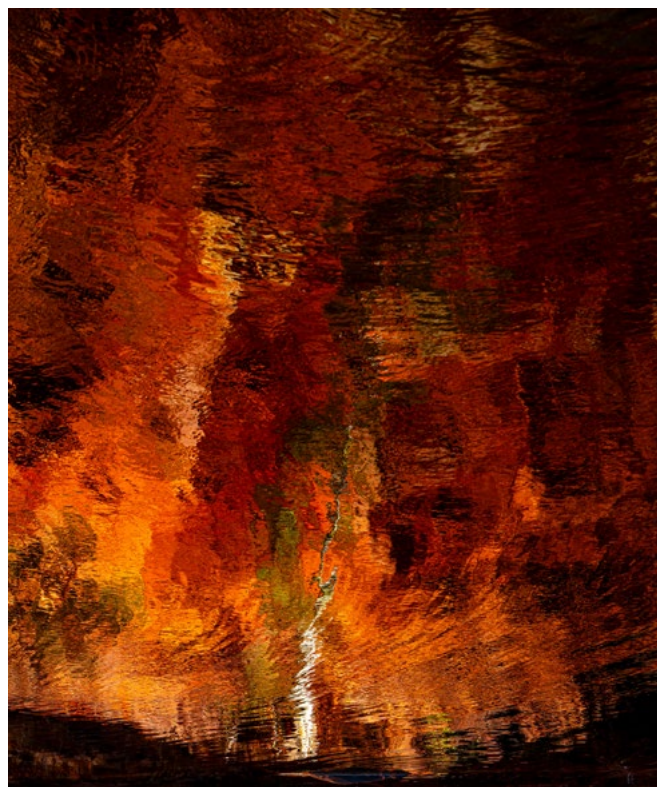
Inverted reflection

looked over another photographer's shoulder and been perplexed at what they are framing up?

- You are only as good as the worst image you care to share with people. There is only one best shot. Including similar but not as good images from a series just detracts from your best image. People often only remember the poor images.
- I find (and it's possibly just me) your first or second shot is nearly always the best in a series. Your first shot is probably the closest to what you picture in your mind (unless you ruin the exposure). Be mindful if each subsequent shot isn't improving on your first image. If so, walk away and rethink your composition or exposure.
- Mobile phones – just turn them around to shoot landscape! Stop shooting in portrait mode. Just stop it unless you are a slave to Instagram! After many years, I finally bought myself a phone with a good camera. The best and most beneficial



Inverted reflection



Inverted reflection

photographic accessory I have ever bought.

- Jump in to shadows and crouch in puddles! Look to the skies! Early mornings and late afternoons bring long shadows from trees, hilltops, steeples, even gravestones. Position your camera just in the shade and shoot into the sun for some drama and those sometimes-appreciated sparkly flares. Ordinary puddles make for great reflection opportunities on still days if you get your lens down low. Inverted reflections are a favourite subject of mine. Keep



Moving water

an eye open for great cloud backdrops to enhance your foreground. Ultra-wide angle lenses sometimes capture spectacular, amazing cloud formations your eye doesn't pick up until you look through the viewfinder.

- Look over your shoulder at sunset and sunrise. Novices of photography love a golden sky (and so do I quite often), but many times the real picture is what that low sun is illuminating.
- Don't make excuses for what you think may be a poor image. If you must publish or share a less than ideal image for whatever reason, don't draw unnecessary attention to its faults – e.g., "Just an iPhone shot." Don't say, "It needs a bit of work." If it needs a bit of work, do it before posting – people can wait. If you still think it's really poor – see above truism.
- Paul's two favourite camera accessories or features. Your choice of what's in your camera bag helps you define your style. For me: 1), variable neutral density filter dial in darkness and slow shutter speeds. They work well with mirrorless cameras. I would love it if my camera's ISO went down to 12 or 8 and I could throw away my ND filters! And 2), fully articulated rear screens. Like throwing away your tripod, articulated screens can help you get those creative shots from all sorts of angles. I personally (almost) never use my viewfinder, so I don't care how many bazillion pixels it has. This may be as a result of wearing glasses most of my life and tiring of pushing my face up to the viewfinder. Dioptre adjustments don't work for me as I still have to do something with my glasses and you often have to check your subject away from the camera.

- I always shoot JPEG + raw and big JPEGs. Quite often a well-saturated and low contrast scene comes out perfectly in your JPEG, saving a lot of time processing your raw file. I often shoot with a manual colour balance, so the resulting JPEG is a good colour representation of the scene in front of me – like a digital negative. Often it's months before I get to process my raws and by then I have forgotten what the colours were really like, so I refer back to that JPEG. I spend a lot of time trying to get my raw file to look like my JPEG. I lament that most cameras don't shoot TIFFs like my old Olympus E300 did.
- Saturation – a criticism I cop is that some of my images might be a little oversaturated, so I try to critically assess my processing to keep it real and maintain some credibility. It starts because I have all my cameras and drones preset on vivid (or the like), so I do like a bit of colour and I believe that's how I see things. I grew up shooting Fujichrome Velvia.

Well, that sums me up. As you may conclude, I am a somewhat casual photographer at times with perhaps a freestyling attitude and I do get some mild criticism for not treating each image and scene I take with perhaps the due consideration it deserves. On the other hand, I feel that I come back from every trip with a bag full of great images, rather than two or three maybe exemplary ones. I like to think I get them as well. The choice is yours.

So, what sums you up? Have a think when you next press the shutter.

COMPOSITION DIRECTING ATTENTION

If photography is a form of communication, then we need to show our viewers exactly what we are talking about. Good composition will direct our viewers' attention to what matters in the frame.

Many photographers think (or hope) that they can fix an average photograph in Lightroom or Photoshop. And it's true that post-production can transform a capture, but if you want a great photograph at the end, you should start with a great capture. That means considering the light, the angle, the exposure and the composition – as much as possible – at the time you take the photograph.

However, at the same time you get everything as best you can in-camera, there's nothing wrong in having a plan or an idea of how you can take your capture to the next level with post-production.

In the photograph of the penguin on the next page, the framing and composition have been established at the moment of exposure and even without much post-production magic, it's still a pretty good photograph. At the time, I chose a low angle to match the subject. I selected a penguin standing on his own and I waited for him to 'do something interesting'. The telephoto lens provides shallow depth-of-field and the background of more penguins and icebergs is suitably blurred.

The original capture has used contrast and balance to create a strong composition, but there's more to it. What do you look at? What do you notice first? What catches your attention?

I'm hoping the answer is the penguin standing alone with his wings outstretched because I have used post-production to direct your attention to him (or her).

The best time to use post-production is when the basics are in place and all you're doing is emphasising the point. The penguin is already there, but by using post-production to

emphasise the point, to direct the viewer's attention, I am able to tell an even stronger story.

In fact, if you refer back to the article on Contrast in an earlier issue [BP122], you'll see that I have used contrast in several ways to direct attention: a light subject on a darker background, more contrast on the subject and less contrast on the background, clean light (white balance) on the subject and coloured light on the background. All through the image, contrast is being subtly used to direct the viewer's attention to the subject.

This is when photographs work best, when the subject matter is in agreement with the design elements of the photograph. There would be no point having a background penguin highlighted like this as the graphic design would not support the obvious subject of the photograph.

Many photographers wonder what they should do to improve their photograph when editing and often this can be answered by deciding what they want to emphasise and then directing the viewer's attention appropriately.

Post-production is great for this, but as mentioned, the best results begin with a strong capture.

On the following pages are a series of examples – before reading the caption, can you see how these images direct attention?

*This article is based on Peter Eastway's **Photo Process** educational program found on the www.betterphotographyeducation.com website.*



The Adelie Penguin is obviously the centre of attention in this frame. But look at how it has been achieved. It begins in-camera by using a long telephoto with shallow depth-of-field, so only the penguins in the front are focused. Then in post-production, the surrounding penguins have been muted in colour and contrast while the hero penguin lightened and given extra contrast. The rule can work two ways – either the subject is made lighter than its surroundings, or the surroundings are made darker than the subject! The colour temperature on the penguin is cleaner (whiter) than the warm and cool colours surrounding it – another way of directing attention where we want it to be.



This is a fairly obvious example of directing attention.

Even so, note how the sky has been muted in contrast, tone and colour saturation and the foreground also darkened and desaturated. In this way the middle of the frame is more colourful and, in the middle of this area sits our subject.

The subject is dark. So, there's not much point trying to make it lighter. However, the trick is to create contrast, so by keeping the near silhouette, the sky behind is lightened to direct the viewer's attention. Note how the small figure uses the same device.





You might argue there is only one subject, so why do we need to direct attention to it? Surely it is obvious? True, but when design elements are used to emphasise what is obviously your subject, the image can be stronger still. Colour, tone and contrast have all been used to enhance the iceberg.

You can use tone, contrast and colour in post-production to direct your viewer's attention. The colours of the surrounding rocks have been desaturated, while the pool's saturation has been enhanced – there's no doubt what the viewer is expected to look at. And then once looking at the pool, the light tones of the waterfall further direct the viewer's attention once again.





Subject and design working hand in hand to direct your attention. Note what is being used, not just the enhanced colour of the mouth, but the selective focus of the telephoto lens. The viewer knows exactly what to pay attention to.

The basics are already set. But notice how the light tones of the church are backed by increasingly darker tones in the sky. As this was a lith print made in the darkroom, the post-production was far from carefully constructed, but it shows how the graphic components of your composition can direct the viewer's attention.





Sometimes simple is best. Here the subject has been lightened a little more than reality, and a darker, lower contrast background and surroundings employed to direct the viewer's attention to the monastery. Is the yellow in the sky a little strong? Perhaps, but for most people's values, a monastery has more importance than a sky and so I believe the post-production is still doing its job.

The colour of the polar bear was enhanced to direct the viewer's attention. And the yellow contrasts directly with the blue of the ice cap behind, helping to enhance its impact, despite its small size.



UNDERSTANDING COLOUR MANAGEMENT

First things first. What type of monitor are you using to view your photographs? Are you looking at the screen on your phone or a tablet? A laptop screen or a stand-alone monitor? Mac or PC? They are all different.

For each monitor you use, how accurate is the colour, contrast and brightness it is displaying? Do you calibrate and profile your monitor regularly? Unless you have a good quality, correctly set colour monitor, how do you know what you're looking at? It is very difficult to produce consistently high quality prints unless you're editing on an accurate monitor.

Your monitor is the key to good editing and printing because you use it to make assessments and adjustments to your images. Unless it's accurate, how do you know those assessments and adjustments are correct?

Colour management isn't just about your monitor, but it's a good place to start.

Colour Management

The principle behind colour management is simple. The colours in the digital photo file should look the same when viewed on a computer monitor, when printed on an inkjet printer, or when displayed using a digital projector.

In practice, this doesn't happen.

This is because monitors, printers and projectors are imperfect. They have lots of idiosyncrasies which means a monitor might show a pure red as slightly purple, while an inkjet printer might print the same red as slightly orange.

If you're using your monitor to adjust the colours and tones in your photograph, it's important that it is showing you the right colours and tones. It is equally important that the printer produces the right colours and tones.

Monitor Calibration and Profiling

Take a visit to your local television store and look at the variety of screen displays. What you will quickly notice is that each television screen has slightly different colour, contrast and brightness characteristics.

The same applies to computer monitors and each has its own individual characteristics. These characteristics also change over time as the monitor wears out.

There are three steps to set up your monitor correctly.

The first is to calibrate it, which means setting up its controls so that it shows the best quality colour and contrast that it is capable of. Most monitors, even when new out of the box, are not set up optimally (although Apple would disagree with

this), so calibrating adjusts the monitor's settings to produce an optimal picture.

The second step is to profile the monitor, measuring what colours it actually produces and then producing a series of instructions to change those colours so they precisely match the colour space profile in your photograph.

The profiling process produces a 'monitor profile', a small computer file, which sits between your digital photo file (your photograph) and the monitor, adjusting the colours on the screen so they match the colour space/profile you are using. In other words, when the computer sends the monitor a colour from your photograph file, it first goes through a translation process – the profile.

The profile says, "Here's a red colour, but I know the monitor tends to show reds with a bit of blue added in, so before I send the colour through to the monitor, I will remove some blue so that when it gets there, the monitor will accurately display the correct colour in the photograph."

A profile is a custom colour dictionary, ensuring the colours in your photograph are correctly interpreted by the colour monitor.

With a correctly calibrated and profiled monitor, when you make changes to colour, contrast and brightness in your photographs, you can feel assured that what you are seeing on your screen is also happening to your photograph file on the computer.

And the third step? Ensure that your photo files have an embedded colour space, like Adobe RGB or ProPhoto RGB. This usually happens automatically when you export a file from ACR, Lightroom or Capture One etc.

Printer Profiling

In the same way that monitors need a profile to produce the correct colour and tonality, so do printers. The printer gets its information directly from the digital photo file and those colours are 'corrected' using a separate printer profile.

Different inks and papers produce different results, so a printer profile will only work with one printer/ink and paper combination. Most printers come with 'standard' printer profiles which you use to make your prints. Unfortunately, these are rarely as good as a custom profile. We'll discuss the different types of printer profiles next issue, but in the meantime, the takeaway is that a printer profile is essential to make a good print.

Once you have your monitor and printer profiles set up, the colour management system will work automatically in programs like Photoshop, Lightroom etc.

Problems Without Profiles



With no profile, any colour casts in the computer monitor will affect the look of the photo - so the screen image DOES NOT look like the photo file.



The photo file (TIF, JPEG etc.) stores all the colour information, but you can't see it without a computer monitor or a printer. If either of these devices has a colour cast, your photo file will not reproduce correctly.

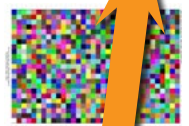


With no profile, colours and even how light or dark a print looks are unknown to the printer - so the print DOES NOT look like the photo file.

You Should See No Difference



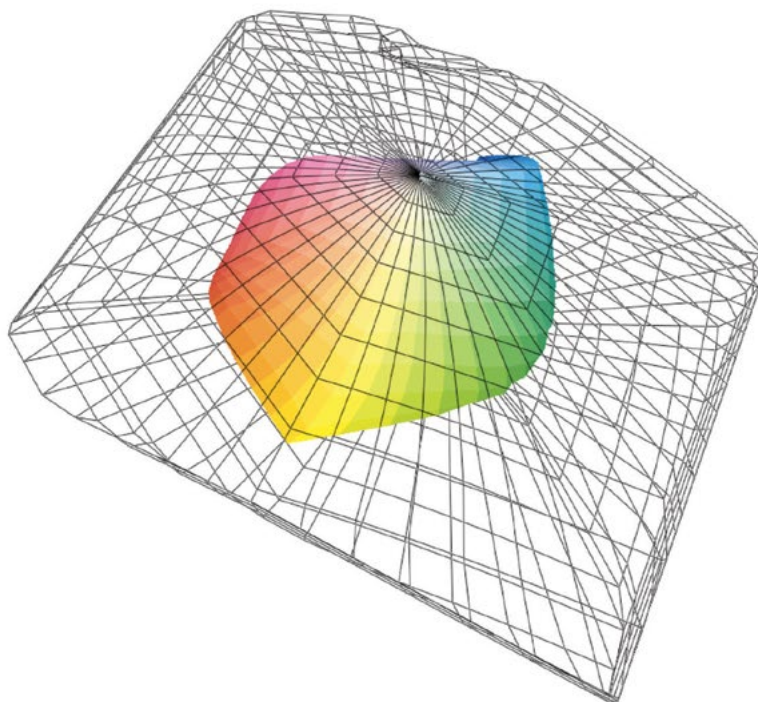
A monitor profile adjusts the colours so the monitor - with all its limitations - can provide a screen image that MATCHES the photo file.



For colour management to work, you need to attach or assign a profile to your photo files. If in doubt, use Adobe RGB.



A printer profile adjusts the colours and tones so the printer / ink / paper system reproduces the colours on paper so they MATCH the photo file, as best as possible



A COLOUR SPACE VS A COLOUR PROFILE

Here's a refresher for you, explaining what colour spaces, gamuts and profiles are and showing you what they look like – graphically.

A colour gamut is a range or collection of colours.

There can be wide gamuts with lots of colours, or narrow gamuts with fewer colours.

When photographers talk about colour gamuts, they are usually referring to colour spaces. They say a colour is 'in gamut' or 'out of gamut'. However, we don't really talk that much about gamuts, rather we talk about colour spaces and profiles which are specific types of colour gamuts.

The page opposite shows three colour spaces depicted two different ways. A colour space is also a range or collection of colours. When photographers talk about colour spaces, they are using the term as a universal standard.

Just as one metre and two metres measure length, so sRGB and Adobe RGB (1998) describe different collections (or gamuts) of colours.

A profile is also a colour gamut and a colour space, but when photographers talk about profiles, they are referring to a specific set of colours (or tones for a black and white profile) that apply to a particular device, such as a monitor or printer.

While Adobe RGB (1998) is a universal colour space, a profile for an Epson printer with gloss paper and pigment inks describes the specific set of colours that can be reproduced with that printer, that inkset and that paper stock.

If you change the printer, the paper or the ink, you will end up with a different set of colours and a different profile will be required (because the results change).

A profile describes the colours that a printer (or a monitor)

can reproduce and it works hand in hand with a colour management system to convert the colours on your screen and in your print to look accurate.

Colour spaces are also called 'profiles'. Most photographers save their photographs (image files, whether JPEG, TIFF or Photoshop) with either an sRGB or an Adobe RGB (1998) profile. Other profiles include Display P3, ProPhoto and Joseph Holmes CAM 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Why is all this important? Take a look at the graph reproduced above. The wire frame represents all the colours in the ProPhoto RGB (1998) colour space. Inside the wire frame, the coloured shape represents all the colours a particular matte-surface colour print can show.

The question is, how do we change all the colours in ProPhoto RGB (or any larger space) so they appear in the print or on the monitor (which has a smaller colour space)?

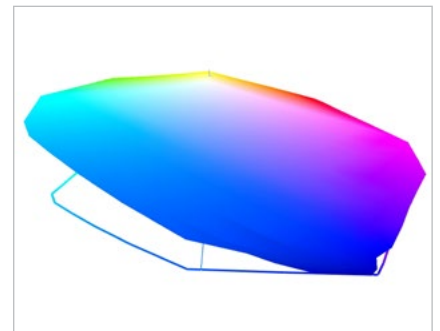
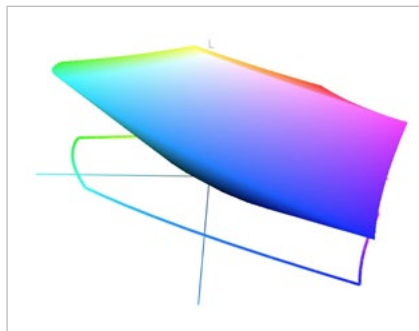
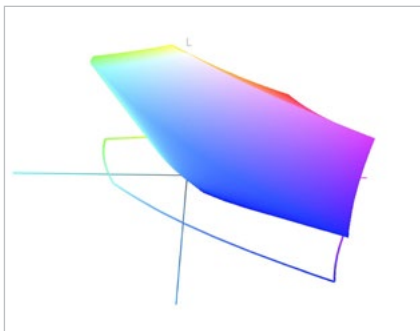
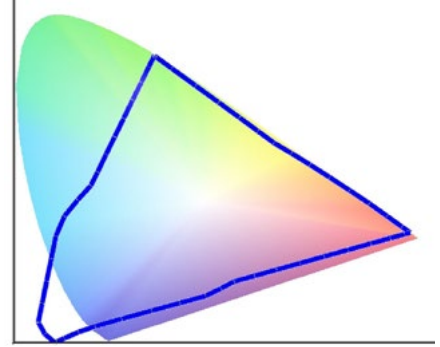
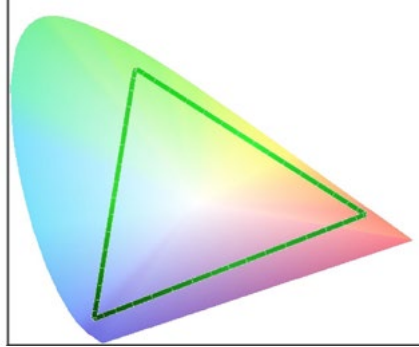
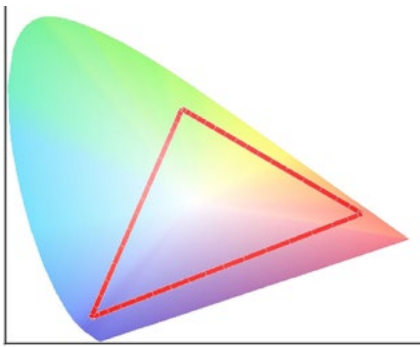
Fortunately, we don't need to worry too much about 'how' this is done. We only have to look at our screen and prints to know that it works pretty well in practice.

The point to understand is that there is a process that takes colours in your digital photo files and 'maps' or converts them to the correct colours on your screen and in your print.

Problems arise when the mapping process doesn't work properly. For instance, if the process doesn't know what the starting point is (you haven't saved or embedded a colour space profile with your digital photo file), how does it know what colours to turn it into?

Hopefully, as you ponder this issue, the importance of colour profiles in your photography will become crystal clear.

COMMON COLOUR SPACES



sRGB

The above diagrams show you three different colour spaces.

The bottom row shows three-dimensional representations. You can see that Adobe RGB (1998) in

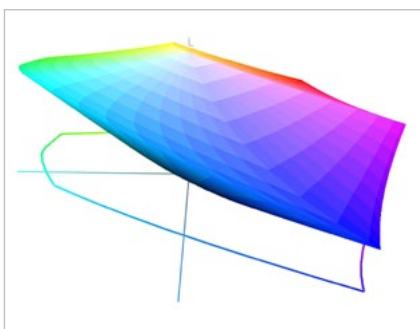
Adobe RGB (1998)

the middle is considerably larger (contains a wider range of colours) than sRGB on the left, but it is not as big as ProPhoto RGB on the right. The top row is a two-dimensional

ProPhoto RGB

representation. They give you a clear idea of how much or little of the visible spectrum is represented by the colour space (found inside the triangle shape).

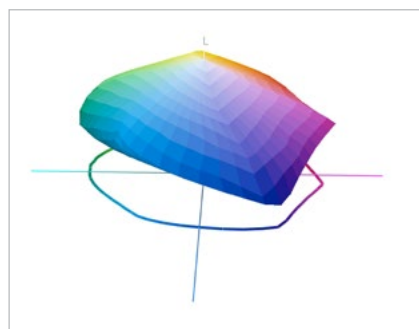
COMMON PROFILES



Monitor – EIZO CG318

After viewing the common colour spaces up top, compare them with the three profiles here.

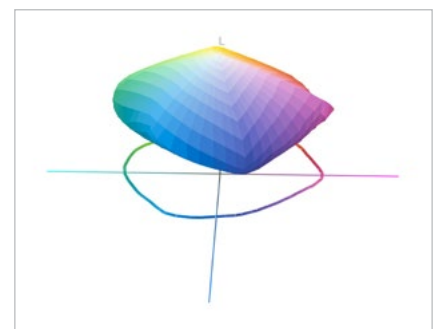
The Eizo graph shows the colours that can be displayed on a high-end monitor. You can see that it approximates the Adobe RGB colour space. However, not all monitors are nearly this good (it's



Gloss paper

worth spending a little more on a good quality monitor).

The two graphs on the right show glossy and matte inkjet papers. While every printer/ink/paper combination is slightly different, you can see that the number of colours in an inkjet print is significantly smaller than the colours we



Matte paper

work with on a monitor. And note how matte paper has fewer colours than a gloss papers

Despite these issues, colour management produces quite workable solutions, squeezing colour spaces into smaller profiles – and there's no doubt we can be very happy with the results.

WHAT HAPPENS WITH 'OUT OF GAMUT' COLOURS?

When we look at a photograph like this (right), we see a church with a bright yellow field in front, sitting against a background of muted greens and browns.

To display this photograph with its correct colours, a colour monitor or a colour printer must be able to reproduce these colours. However, as you will see in the following demonstration, this isn't always possible.

Let's look at the photograph using ColorThink software and compare it to graphs of the colour spaces and colour profiles we're likely to use.

ColorThink software has analysed the colours in the photograph and shown them as squares of colour in the diagrams opposite. In the first diagram, just the colours (the gamut of the photograph) are shown.

In the middle diagram, the wire frame around the colours shows the extent of the colours that can be captured and displayed within the Adobe RGB colour space. This is typical of a high quality computer monitor and the colours it can reproduce.

In the bottom diagram, there is a smaller wire frame showing a printer profile for matte paper. It's a much smaller colour space.

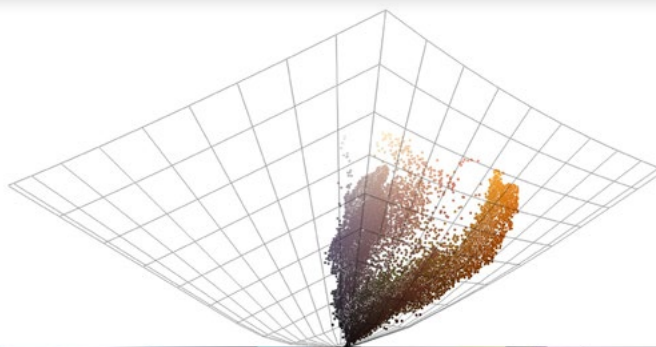
Most if not all of the colours in our sample photograph can be reproduced within the Adobe RGB colour space, so a good monitor will have no trouble reproducing them. Compare this with the matte paper printer profile where many colours can't be reproduced. If you look closely, you'll see that many of the darker yellows and oranges are outside the smaller wire frame, indicating the printer is not capable of reproducing them correctly. It can accurately print the lighter yellows, greens and browns inside the frame, but not the colours that are outside. Those colours simply don't exist in the ink and paper combination being used.

These colours are called 'out of gamut' colours. They will be reproduced as closely as possible (ink will be used), but not accurately – and not as they really are.

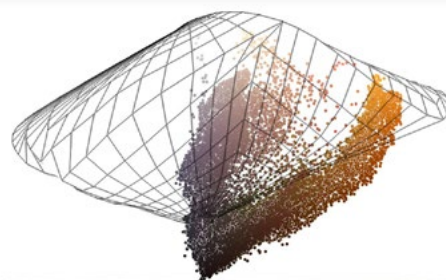
For readers who print their work, this bottom graph shows very clearly what happens with matte papers – the blacks and dark shadows cannot be reproduced accurately because this type of ink on this type of paper cannot make those colours and tones.



Graphical representation of colours in the photo above



Adobe RGB colour space or computer monitor profile



Printer profile – matte paper

(We're looking at the same example photo, but the diagrams have been changed to help show the problem colours.)

If we were viewing this photograph on a high quality colour monitor which effectively reproduces the Adobe RGB (1998) colour space (such as the EIZO CG319X or CG2700S), we would see all of the blues and yellows and darker tones correctly.

Many computer monitors don't have nearly as large a colour gamut as Adobe RGB, so some of the colours would be 'clipped', meaning they can't be seen properly and are reassigned to the best match available.

The same happens when we make a print. A quick look at the printer colour profile (below) shows that many of the yellows and darker colours are outside the printer's capabilities.

Does this mean the photograph won't print? No, it will print, but the colour management behind the printing process will substitute colours that are as close as possible. The result will be very recognisable and possibly quite acceptable, but it won't be the same as the original.

This only becomes a problem for high-end photography and people like us – so if you were wondering what was happening to your prints, this is probably part of the answer.

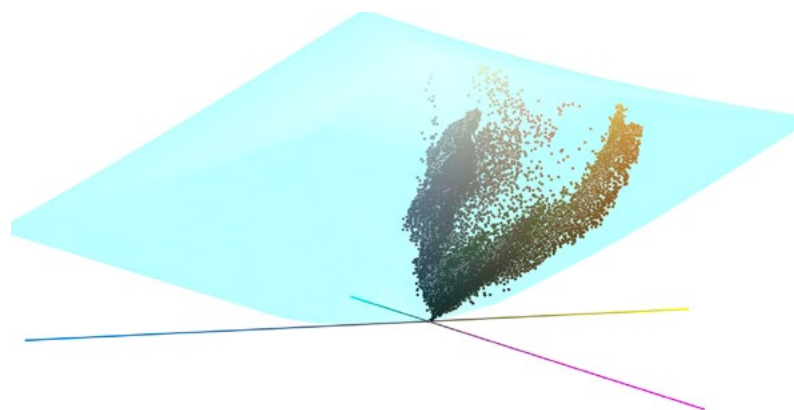
The photos on the right simulate what happens automatically when you print a photograph with out of gamut colours.

On the top is the original photograph with the full range of colours.

Unfortunately, this full range of colours won't fit into the matte print colour space, so the 'system' makes an adjustment and moves all the colours currently outside the printer profile so they sit inside the profile. Notice what happens to the photograph on the bottom: the yellows are much duller and the darker colours are losing some of their saturation. We have lost our bright, saturated colours.

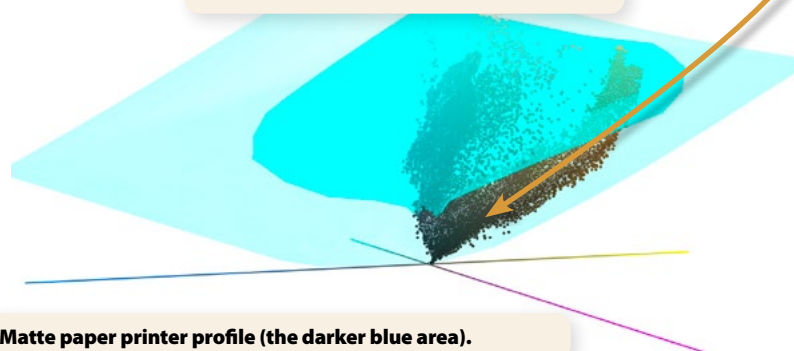
This type of process happens with every printed photograph to a greater or lesser extent. Our challenge as photographers is to understand what happens and then either make adjustments in editing to compensate for the changes, or perhaps choose a different paper for output.

If you now understand what's happening, you're halfway there!

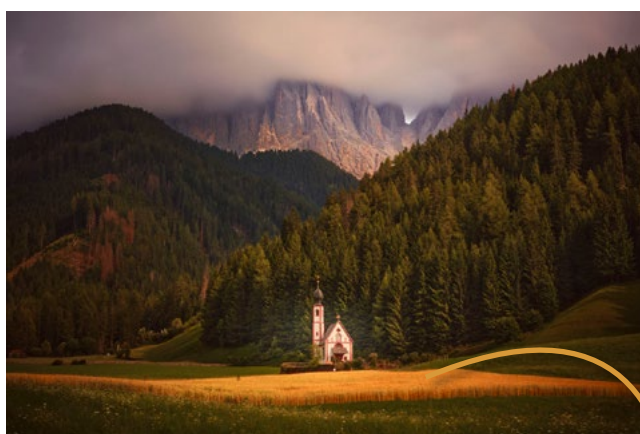


Eizo CG319X monitor – the light blue area – shows all colours are 'in gamut'.

These colours are outside the gamut – and are called 'out of gamut' colours.

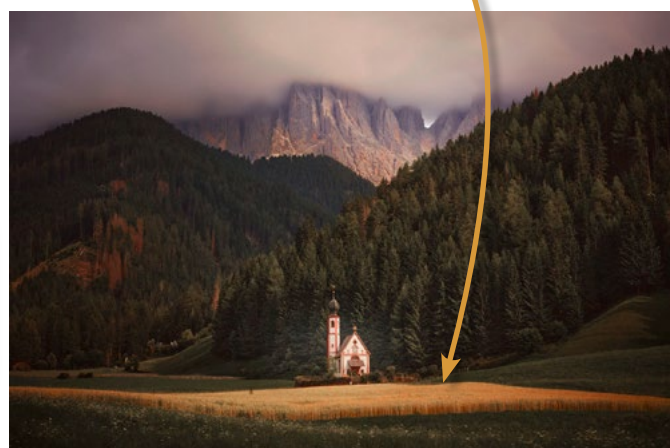


Matte paper printer profile (the darker blue area).



The colours in the photo

The colours the printer is capable of reproducing (simulated)



WHERE DO THE MISSING COLOURS GO?

With a bit of luck, we now understand that all the colours of the world cannot be recorded, but that our camera and usually our computer monitor offer a larger range of colours than can be reproduced by a printer.

We also know that the 'colour management system' we use changes the out of gamut colours in our file to similar colours that the monitor and printer are capable of reproducing.

Despite this change, our photos can look really good, so obviously the

technology is doing something right.

However, sometimes the technology makes changes that are not necessary and, especially when it comes to our prints, they can look flatter or less colourful than they need to. What's happening?

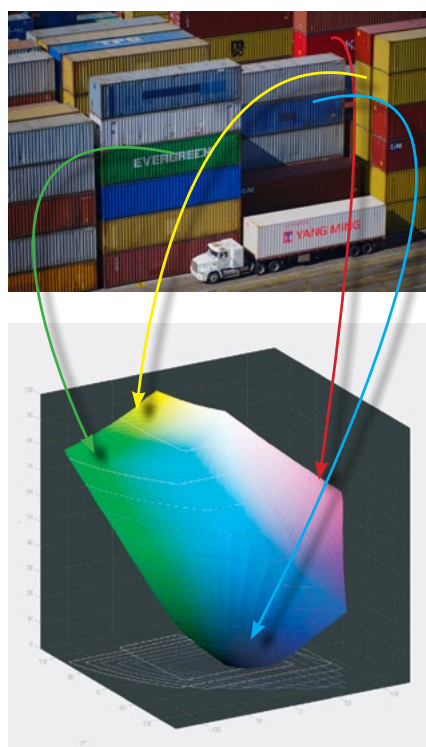
The following illustrations explain what happens.

A printer can only produce a range of colours depending on its inks and the paper you're using. So colours in our image file are 'remapped' to colours that can be reproduced by the printer.

If the colours in the photograph can be reproduced accurately by the printer, they do not need to be remapped. On the other hand, to produce a visually pleasing result, often all the colours are remapped so the interrelationships between colours are maintained.

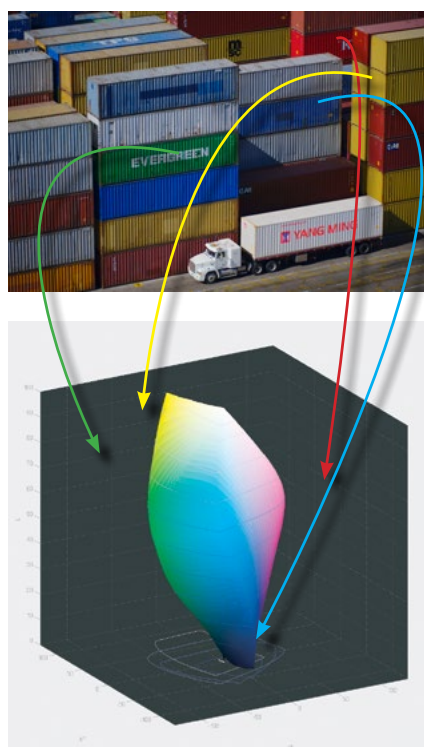
There are different ways of mapping the colours which can produce quite different results and we will discuss the two methods used by photographers.

The problem is illustrated in the diagrams below.



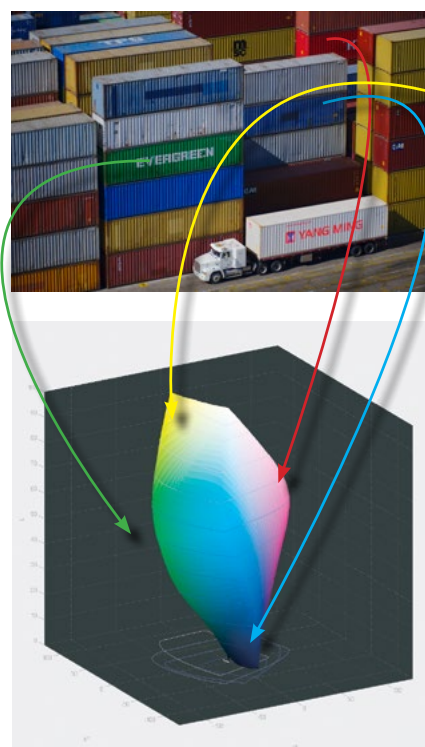
The Camera Provides This

Starting Point. In a colour photograph, the Adobe RGB (1998) colour space (illustrated here) can depict highly saturated colours. (It can also depict less saturated colours, but these generally aren't a problem because they all sit in the middle of the colour space and overlap with the printer's colours as well.)



The Printer Offers This

Problems arise when those saturated colours are sent to a printer. Essentially, the printer is incapable of producing the same colours. They simply don't exist within the range of colours the printer can produce. These colours are now 'out of gamut', meaning they don't fall within the gamut (colour range) of the printer.



The Colour Management System Changes Colours

The solution is to map the colours to a 'best match' colour within the capabilities of the printer. True, the result won't be exactly the same, but to our eyes, it can look remarkably good. The point to note is that the colours are being moved around when you produce a print – and sometimes you will need to control exactly where those colours move to.

RENDERING INTENT

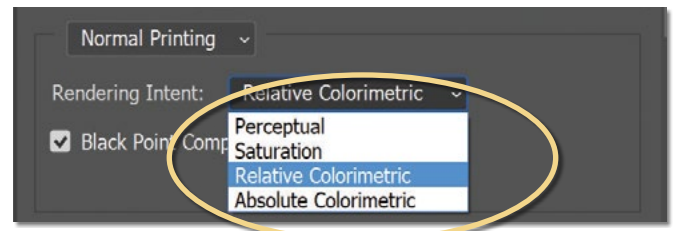
The way a colour management system maps colours from your digital image file to the printer (and the monitor) is called a 'rendering intent'. You will see this term when using printer dialogs in Photoshop, Lightroom, etc.

There are four rendering intents available in Photoshop: perceptual, saturation, relative colorimetric and absolute colorimetric.

The two used most by photographers are perceptual and relative colorimetric. (You can experiment with the other two if you wish – rarely will they work better.)

The perceptual rendering intent is designed to preserve the overall colour appearance, so it doesn't just move out of gamut colours into gamut, it also moves in gamut colours further inside the profile. All colours are moved in relation to each other, so absolute values change for all colours. However, in practice it works pretty well for most images.

The relative colorimetric rendering intent is based on the theory that our eyes always adjust to the white of the paper or medium upon which we are viewing the image, so it starts by mapping the whites in our photo image file to the whites that can be produced by the paper.

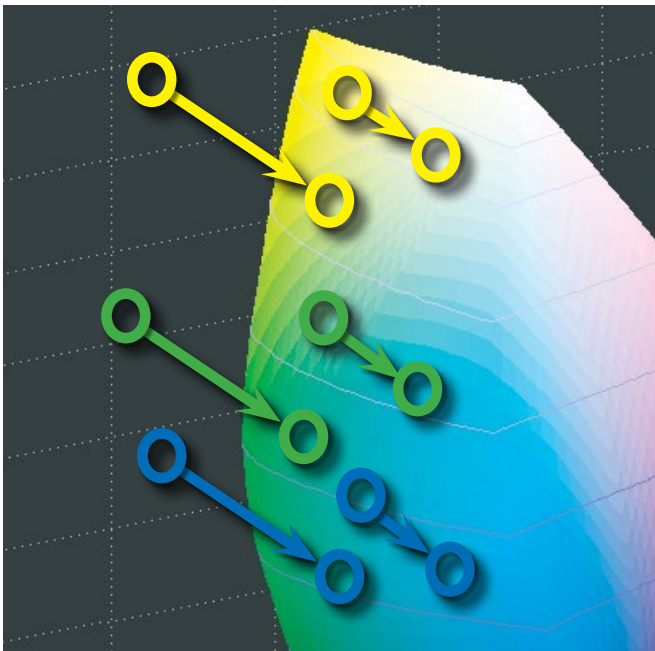


Then it reproduces all the in gamut colours exactly and clips out of gamut colours to the closest reproducible hue. What you'll find is all the out of gamut colours end up along the edge of the colour profile.

If you have a lot of out of gamut colours in your photo, you can find a range of different colours all being mapped to exactly the same hue, causing odd results in your photo.

However, not all images have many out of gamut colours and so the result can be quite acceptable – perhaps even better than perceptual.

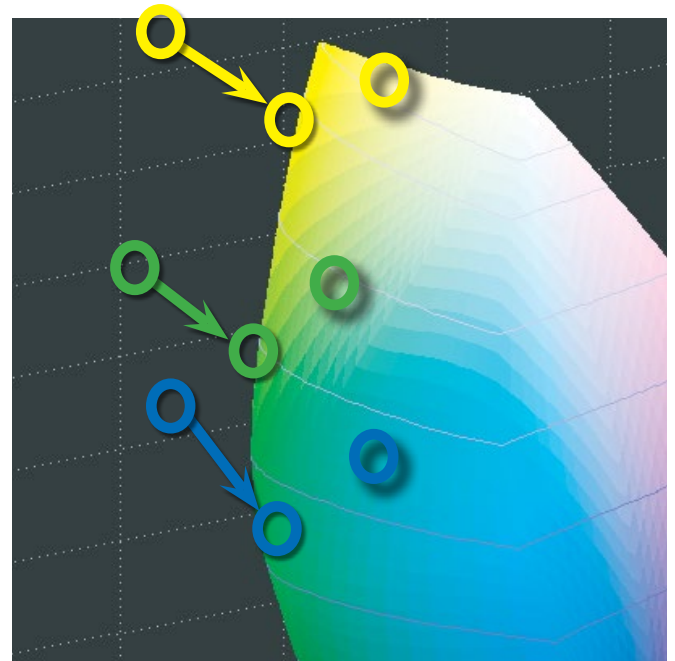
As with all things photographic, it's good to experiment.



Perceptual

The perceptual rendering intent tries to compress **all** the colours in your photo file into the printer's colour gamut, so that the relationship between colours remains similar. This means that both 'in gamut' and 'out of gamut' colours are moved around.

In gamut colours (colours which are already inside both the working colour space and the printer's gamut) are still moved around, even though they don't need to be in order to be reproduced. And it could be that out of gamut colours are moved quite a distance to become in gamut, whereas in gamut colours are moved less drastically, but sufficiently to retain the overall colour relationships within the photo.



Relative Colorimetric

The relative colorimetric rendering intent does things differently. It starts by mapping the white of your photo to the white of the paper you're using.

However, in gamut colours are left where they are, while out of gamut colours are moved to the closest hue – which means you can end up with a lot of colours being reproduced exactly the same, perhaps leading to areas of 'flat colour'.

Of course, not all images have out of gamut colours and sometimes the colours you've captured are exactly the colours you want to see in your print. In this case, relative colorimetric could be a useful option in your quest for the perfect print.

Most experienced photographers try to use this option.

BUILDING A [ZENFOLIO] WEBSITE

Not every photographer exhibits or publishes their work in print, but most of us post

our photos on social media where it gets lost in a labyrinth of other images.

Why not take control of your internet presence and create a personal website?

There is a part of me that laments the digitisation of photography, but that is completely hypocritical because I love the digital workflow I use and the digital prints I make!

The side of digital photography I lament is how we 'consume' photography, primarily on small screens – our phones. While readers of this magazine may spend more time than most viewing work on larger computer monitors, we can't deny the fact that the majority of the world uses a phone to view photographs. For many, it's the only device they have and while these people may not be the viewers we're hoping to attract, there's no arguing that most of the people viewing our photographs today are using a phone.

What a pity.

Positive Benefits

But there is also a benefit to this. If we want to exhibit our work, we can get hundreds if not thousands of people to see it on Instagram or other social media platforms. Compare this to making a photo book; we can show it to family and friends, but the circulation is not going to be huge. Similarly, if we have an exhibition, we might get a few hundred or even a thousand people to see our photographs on the wall, but this is an expensive exercise and short-lived in comparison to posting images on social media.

While in my mind a photo book or an exhibition are the real deal and an image fleetingly viewed on a small screen of lesser value, it's an old school approach.

Rather, I should consider social media and the internet as an opportunity to excite and interest people in my books and prints. I can reach a huge audience for very little cost, from which I may be able to encourage a small percentage to engage with me further – by attending an exhibition or buying a photo book.

Or by visiting my own website.

Stepping Up

Having your own website is both fun and satisfying. And you don't have to be a professional photographer to have one – many enthusiasts run very successful websites. And I am not measuring success by financial results, rather the satisfaction it brings to the photographer.

On the following pages I detail some suggestions and issues which you will need to address if you agree with my premise and decide to create your own website.

I have been using Zenfolio for the past 15 or maybe 20 years to operate my website and so much of my experience is with this particular platform, but the concepts I'm discussing are general in nature and apply to all photography websites.

And if you are interested in seeing how easy it is to drag and drop your photos into a website, Zenfolio (and other suppliers too) offer a free trial with no credit card necessary to start. You will be able to see immediately what your website can look like. A simple website (which is perfect for most readers) can cost as little as \$15 a month.



The Art of the Print

Nothing looks better than a photograph lovingly printed and hung on the wall.

[View Portfolio](#)

Photo: Brett Fordyce

Down South - Late Season

[View Antarctica & South Georgia 2025 - Late Season](#)

Purchasing Prints

I'd love to print a photograph for you - and we can deliver prints all around the world.

01

Edition Prints

Prints for the wall, to live with or as an investment. 'Edition' prints mean that only a limited number of prints of each photograph will be produced - what are often called 'limited editions'. The prints are available in a number of different sizes, but can be sized to order if required - just let Peter know when placing the order.

[Check Out Editions](#)

02

Photographer Prints

Most photographers are not going to buy an Edition print for their wall - they'd prefer to hang one of their own. However, they may be interested in a smaller print and so Peter offers 'Photographer Prints' which are A2 in size. They are available from the Exploration section of the website and are printed to the same high quality.

[See Explorations](#)

03

Print Process

Peter personally prepares all the prints sold on this website from his studio. Using the exquisite Canson cotton-rag papers and Epson's archival pigment inks, he prints on a matte surface to avoid unnecessary reflections when framed. Prints are supplied unframed with a generous white border, are signed and embossed.

[Peter's Bio](#)

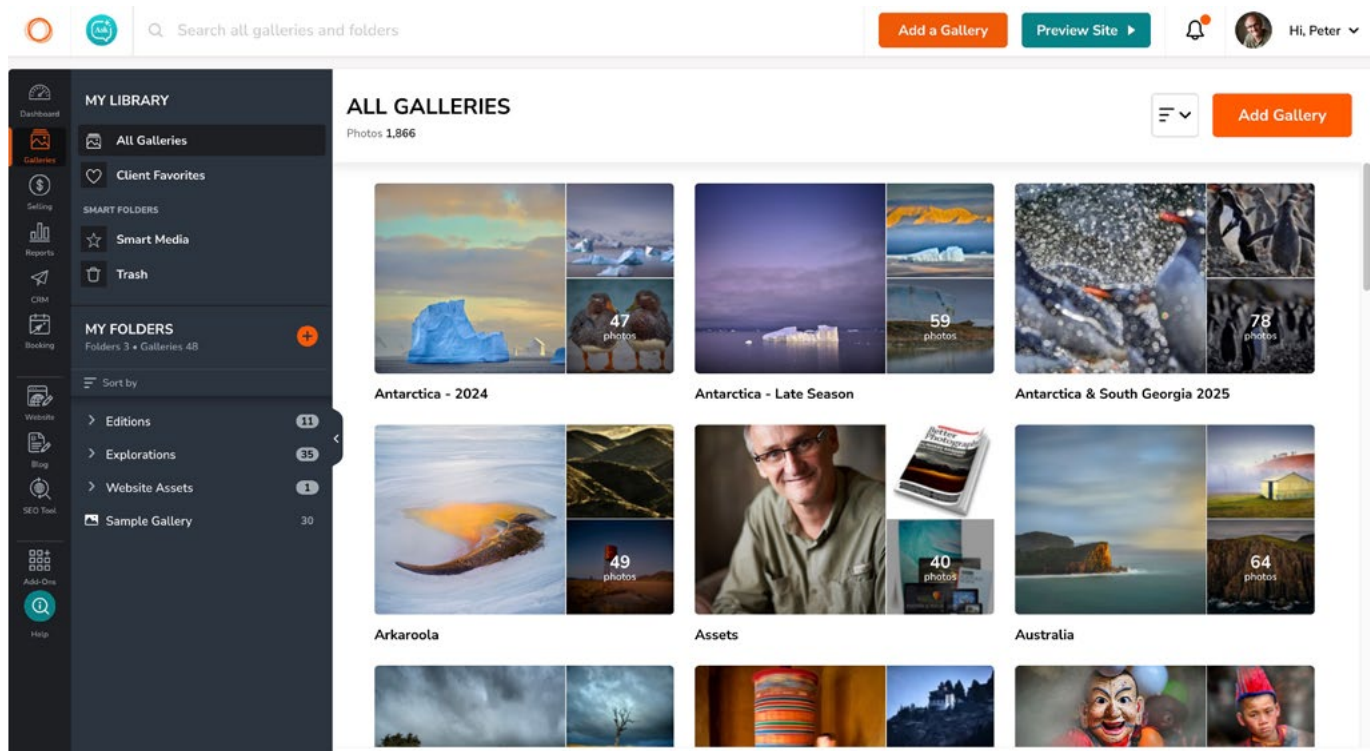
© Peter Eastway

ON PHOTOGRAPHY: METHODS AND FABLES

The New Tradition

Peter Eastway's lavish 282-page book on photography, *The New Tradition*, is beautifully printed and presented. It contains 100 of Peter's favourite photographs, along with background information, behind the scenes and even the techniques he used to create the images. The book can be posted anywhere in the world in a custom-fitted mailing box. Stock is down to fewer than 100 copies left - you can purchase them from Peter's magazine website, www.betterphotography.com.

[See More](#)



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Why do you want a website of your own? What do you need it to achieve?

For many photographers, a website is simply a portfolio of our best work which anyone around the world can see and enjoy. Most photographers like to display their photographs and a personal website is one way you can present your work and, importantly, maintain control over how it is presented and viewed.

You don't really need a website, it is quite enough to just want one!

Is Social Media Enough?

We can all upload photos to social media – and indeed we should. Love it or hate it, social media is a great way to raise the public's awareness of what we are photographing. Sure, social media is also a bit of a scattergun approach to marketing and many people who view our work will have no further interest in following through.

However, as it hasn't cost us anything, we can still encourage the smaller percentage of viewers who do like our work to engage with us further on our own website.

Initially, these people can view our account or page on social media to see more of our work, but our photos are not necessarily ordered or curated in any particular order. They don't necessarily see what we'd like to show them. So, perhaps we should use this section of our social media account to encourage people to visit a website using a link.

With our own website, we control the narrative. With our social media accounts, we have some control over what is seen, but everyone is treated the same. It's hard to be an individual

on a platform that itself sees everyone as a product for them to monetise!

If you want a place on the internet where you can display your work and maintain control over how and when it is displayed, a personal website is a better solution.

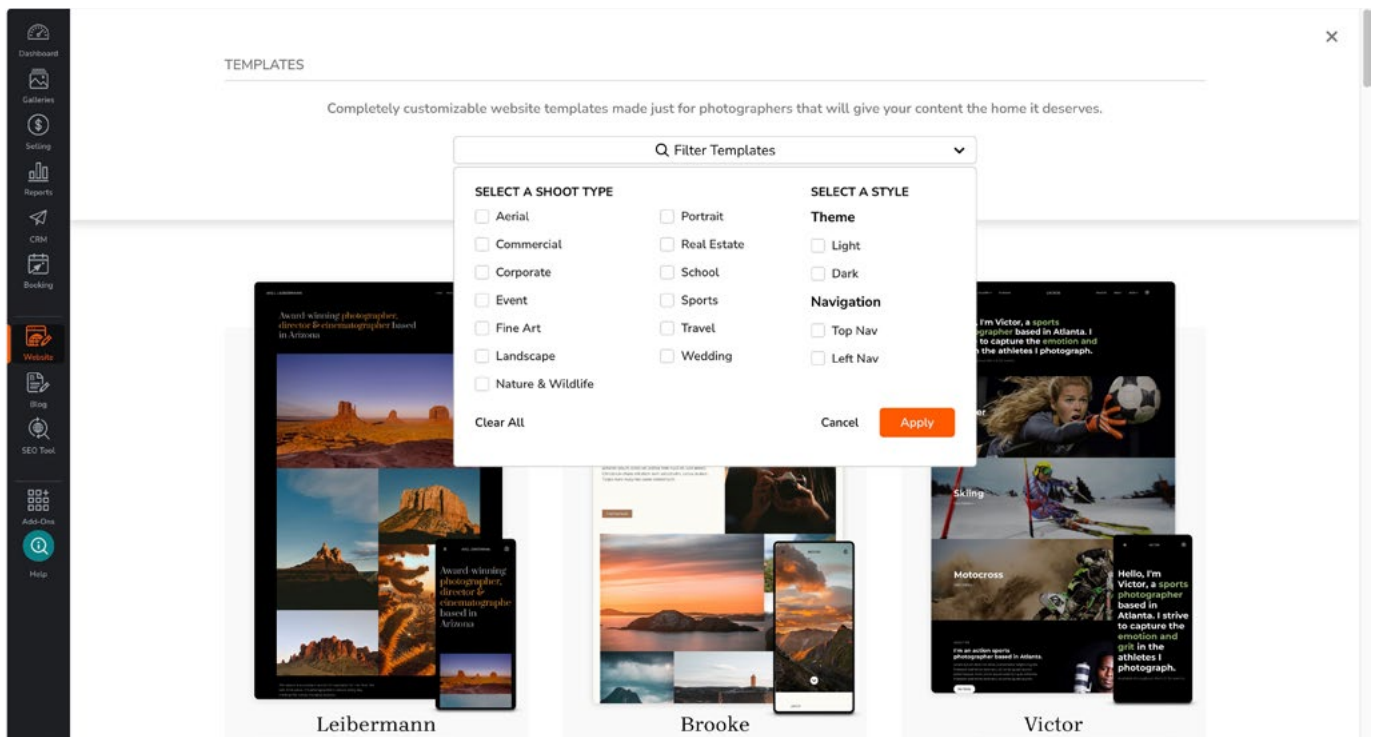
In the past, setting up a personal website has required expertise and assistance for most of us, but today, there are many online solutions designed expressly for photographers like you, which require no knowledge of website coding, just the time and inclination to upload and organise your files.

Zenfolio

I am a Zenfolio ambassador, which means Zenfolio likes my work and gives me a website for free. They also hope I will spread the word and tell people how good they are. Suffice to say, I still enjoy using Zenfolio and the annual cost of my subscription is not a big enough incentive to stay with Zenfolio unless they do a great job.

And they do. I used to have a custom website built and maintained for me, but the cost of coding and maintenance was expensive – thousands of dollars per year compared to a couple of hundred with Zenfolio. It was also frustrating because I couldn't do many changes to the website myself – I had to wait and pay for someone to do it for me.

Perhaps the main reason for using Zenfolio is that I can do all the updates and changes to my content, while it handles all the backroom stuff for running the website. It's a great solution and while I don't use my site to generate huge sales, it's a fantastic place on the internet that I can call my own.



CREATING A STYLE

One of the reasons for creating our own website is to be distinctive – to be different from other photographers.

On social media, we have to conform to predetermined layouts and designs and everyone looks pretty much the same. Some can argue that it is our photos that distinguish us from the commoners, but if you look at the work of successful professionals and practitioners, it's also the way their work is presented that sets them apart.

Sense of Design

To some extent, a photography website builder is also based on predetermined layouts, but as there are lots of them, it's easier to come up with a design that is uniquely yours.

And most website builders are beautifully designed. The pages look clean and professional, they display your photographs to take advantage of the screen or window size and it's all done automatically.

With Zenfolio, you can choose different layouts for different pages of the website. The home pages are different to the index pages for your various portfolios – where you can display a hero photograph, a page of thumbnails, or both. And thumbnails can be shown in rows and columns as you choose, or with a more modern matrix approach which resizes the thumbnails to fit in a variable grid.

Now add in the clever animations as the thumbnails open and scroll and in many ways, if you're not using a website builder like Zenfolio to present your work, you're missing out!

Next, when a viewer clicks on a thumbnail or wishes to view a portfolio in detail, each photo is opened to maximise

the screen/window size on the viewer's computer or device.

Most website builders offer similar layouts and features, so while we have control over how viewers interact with our photographs, we still need to distinguish our website from everyone else and one way to do this is with our logo, our choice of typeface and our colours.

Personalising Your Look

Let's start with a logo. Some of the most famous photographers in the world simply use their name in plain black type and their website design is very minimalist – no colours, no splashy design features. For them, the photographs must speak for themselves.

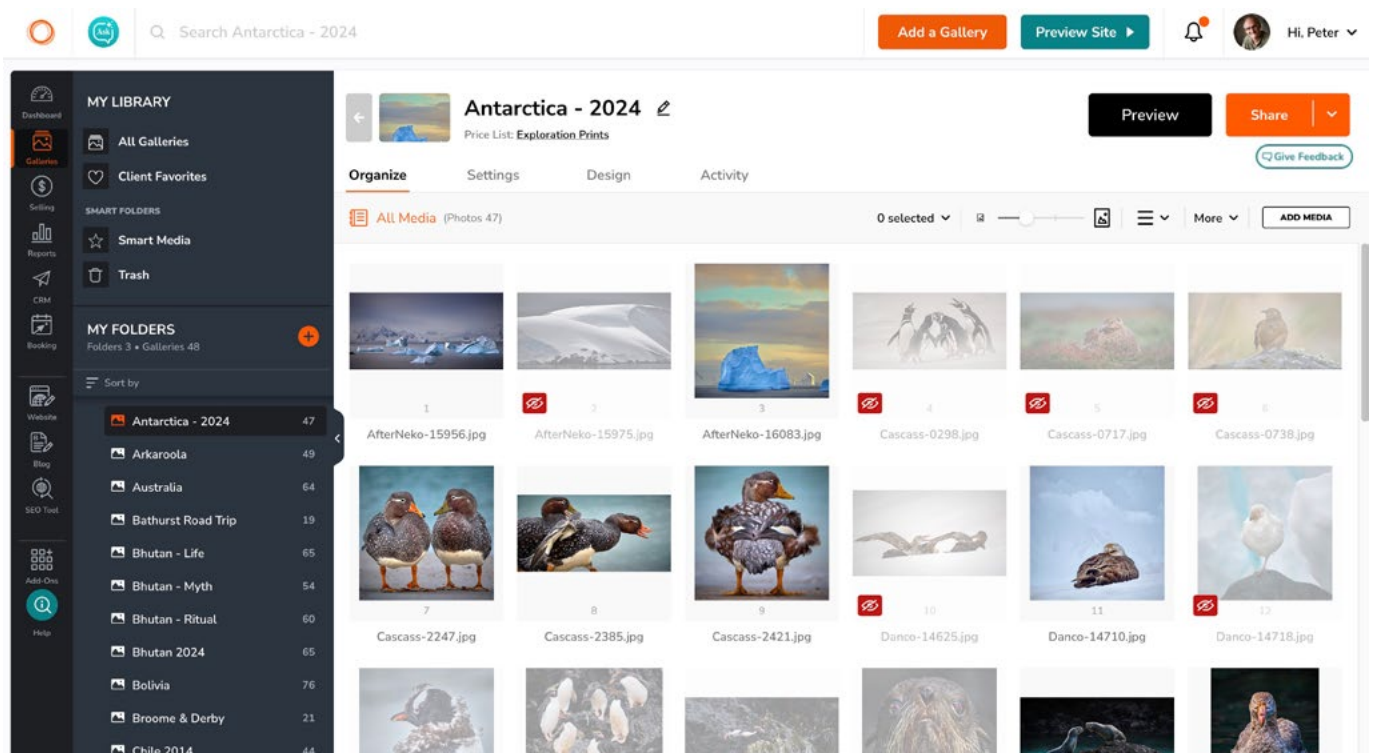
However, for lesser mortals like us, a distinctive logo can be very useful to 'badge' all the pages on our websites. For professional photographers, a good logo is very important as an identifier.

You can find logo design services on the internet for very reasonable prices (or even for free), but have a look around at other websites first to make sure you don't choose a logo design that has also been used by hundreds of other photographers.

With a photo website builder, you can customise aspects of its design that give you a distinctive look – and that's a great start.

One of the cool features with Zenfolio is it provides dozens of templates which are pre-designed. Pick one, add in your logo and you're done - but you can also customise and refine these templates to get exactly what you need.

Best of all, you can preview your design in real time and make changes on the fly. Super easy!



SELECTING AND GROUPING

Designing a website can be a bit like designing a photo book. Apart from the design itself (logo, typeface, colours, etc.), we need to decide on what photos we're going to include, how we're going to group them and how many to show.

Basic Grouping

There's no right or wrong way and there are successful websites using quite different approaches. The most important thing is that the grouping means something to you because chances are, your viewers will eventually cotton on to what you're doing.

If you are an enthusiast photographer and you're just dipping your toes into exhibiting your work online, then maybe you start with annual portfolios – your best photos of 2025, 2026, 2027 and so on. This is a very simple approach and could be workable for a smaller number of photographs. However, if you have hundreds of photos in each year, it will make more sense to your viewers if they are broken into smaller groups or categories.

Once again there are no absolute answers, but if you have more than 30 to 50 photos in a grouping, would it be easier to view and understand what's there if you had two or more smaller groups? Sometimes the answer is yes.

For my website, I have two main categories called Editions and Explorations. These titles probably mean very little to the average visitor and an expert internet marketer might suggest I use something else, but they explain an important difference for me. The Editions are the photographs that I sell in limited editions; the Explorations are groupings of photographs from various tours and travels around the world – I also sell these photos, but they are not limited editions.

Inside these two main categories are multiple sub-categories, based on an exhibition or a portfolio of work. Sometimes I might have sub-sub-categories as well.

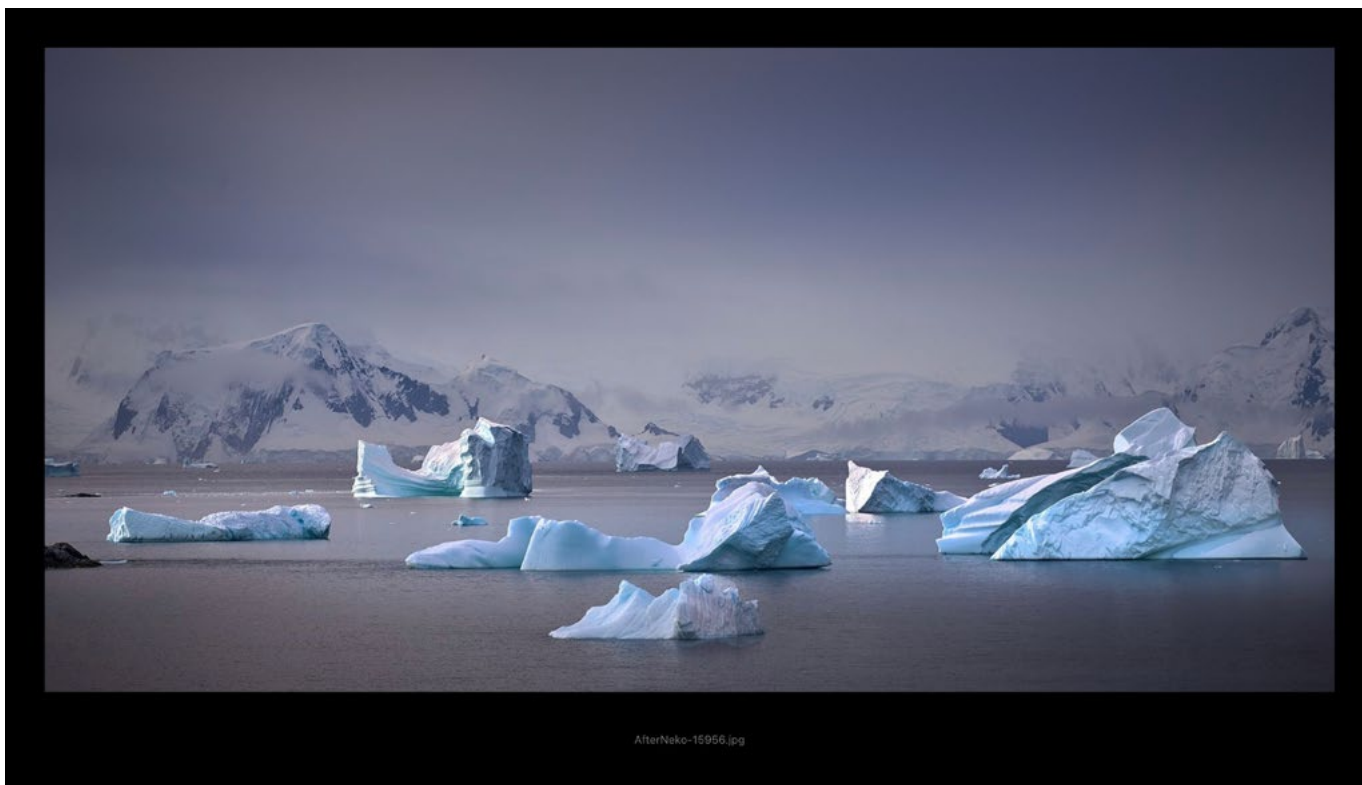
What these groupings do is make it easier for visitors to find the types of photographs they are interested in. There's also a psychological advantage. Just like paragraphs on a page of type make it easier to read a book, so categories or portfolios of photographs make it easier for viewers to engage with your photography.

Grouping Ideas

Returning to the annual portfolio approach, you may retain the year as an overall category, but within it you might have a series of sub-categories. If you're a nature photographer, you might divide your work into birds, mammals and reptiles. If you're a sport photographer, it might be surfing, skiing and skateboarding. For a travel photographer, it might be the locations you visited during the year - Bhutan, Iceland, Italy.

Or you might ignore the annual approach altogether. As your website evolves, the year in which your photo was taken may become irrelevant (or indeed, people might think the photos are out of date). You might be better off establishing your website differently. For instance, if you tell people you're a wildlife photographer, you don't need dates, you just need the type of subject you have photographed - birds, mammals, reptiles, or maybe penguins, seabirds and raptors.

As you collect your photographs for your website, you can use Bridge or Lightroom etc. and their cataloging systems to sort and organise your photographs, ready for final processing.



PREPARING YOUR FILES

Should you post high quality photo files on the internet? Don't you risk them being stolen?

The quality of the files (we'll talk about size shortly) that you upload to your website should be the best you can produce. Your website is no different to a photo book or an exhibition because you are putting yourself on display. Quality matters.

Check that the exposure is right on a correctly calibrated monitor and then enlarge the photo to ensure there are no dust spots!

Photo Theft

Some photographers worry if they put up photographs of excellent quality on their website, they could be stolen by unscrupulous people! Even if your website stops people from directly downloading and copying photographs (Zenfolio offers this), no website can stop someone from taking a screenshot of your images.

You might think taking a screenshot is okay because it's only low resolution, but a 4k screen has plenty of pixels to play with and, if you have uploaded a large file, they could enlarge it over several screen captures and composite them back together.

Even if your file isn't big, it can be dropped into an app like Topaz Gigapixel to make a larger file. And a watermark might discourage image theft, but AI makes it simple to select and remove a watermark from any photograph!

So, you are right to worry about people stealing your work, but it's a reality of using the internet. And you are already taking that risk if you upload files to social media.

So the question becomes: Is the benefit you get from having your work on display greater than the concern you feel from

potentially having your work stolen? This is something you have to answer for yourself.

Assuming you're going to put your work up on the internet, what are the technical specs?

File Size

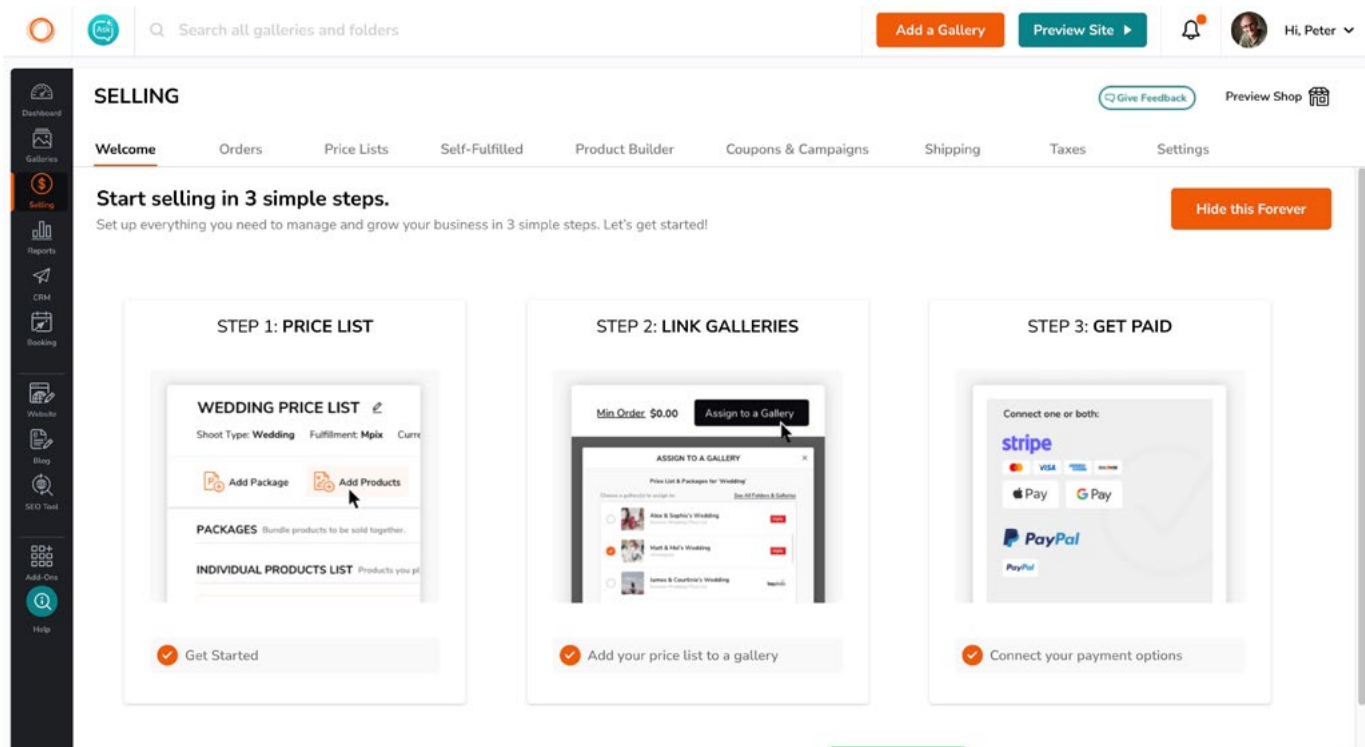
We used to upload small files because of the time it took to load files into web browsers to view. These days, the world has changed, internet speeds are much faster and many photographers are uploading 4000-pixel (horizontally) files because people are viewing the internet on a 4k monitor.

There is probably no need to upload 4000-pixel files – a 2000-pixel file is probably enough, but as a practical decision, I currently size my files to 4000-pixels on the long edge and upload them.

We should also remember high resolution tablet screens – some iPads are 4k as I understand them.

All photos should be saved as JPEGs because they are much smaller than TIFF or PSD files. Use a compression setting of 8 (out of 12 in Photoshop) or around 80% in Lightroom and other applications. I save files with an Adobe RGB colour profile and while there are a lot of people advising sRGB as being the best colour space for the internet, this advice is usually out of date and ignores modern browser technology – not to mention our computer monitors and screens.

Note, some files will compress better than others – highly detailed subjects may be much larger than photos with simpler subjects. This is normal.



SELLING YOUR WORK

Many photographers dream of selling their work – and this is to be commended! There's no better feeling in photography when someone commits to buying one of your prints for their wall, or a digital file for their publication or website.

However, readers should also remember how competitive the market is – especially for the landscape and art decor sectors. Selling digital files for a reasonable return won't be possible if similar photos are available on iStock or any of a multitude of subscription or free sites. To be successful in this part of the market, your photos need to be truly different.

Similarly, selling a framed print is easy enough if the price is low enough. There's nothing wrong with this if you're not running a business. Unfortunately, many photographers sell their photos for not much more than the cost of the paper and frame – it's as though the photograph itself has no value beyond that of the materials from which it is made. Even so, you're more likely to sell prints from your website if you have other promotional projects happening as well, like an exhibition in a local cafe or gallery.

Of course, if you have a business taking portraits, weddings or sports events, then a website like Zenfolio is a great place to do business because you can upload the files from a shoot and your customers can order directly – either from you, or from a print lab with which you're affiliated (and there are labs in Australia who do this).

When you set up your Zenfolio website (and this applies to most photo-based websites), you can select different levels of service depending on the volume of work you expect to sell. Zenfolio takes a commission for facilitating the sales, so you need to include this cost in your pricing.

The set up process is very easy, especially if you're working with a print lab. Essentially, your customers order the prints, the lab fulfils the order and sends you the payment, less its costs. It's a wonderful way of doing business, but it is less likely to work for a landscape or art decor photographer. Here's why.

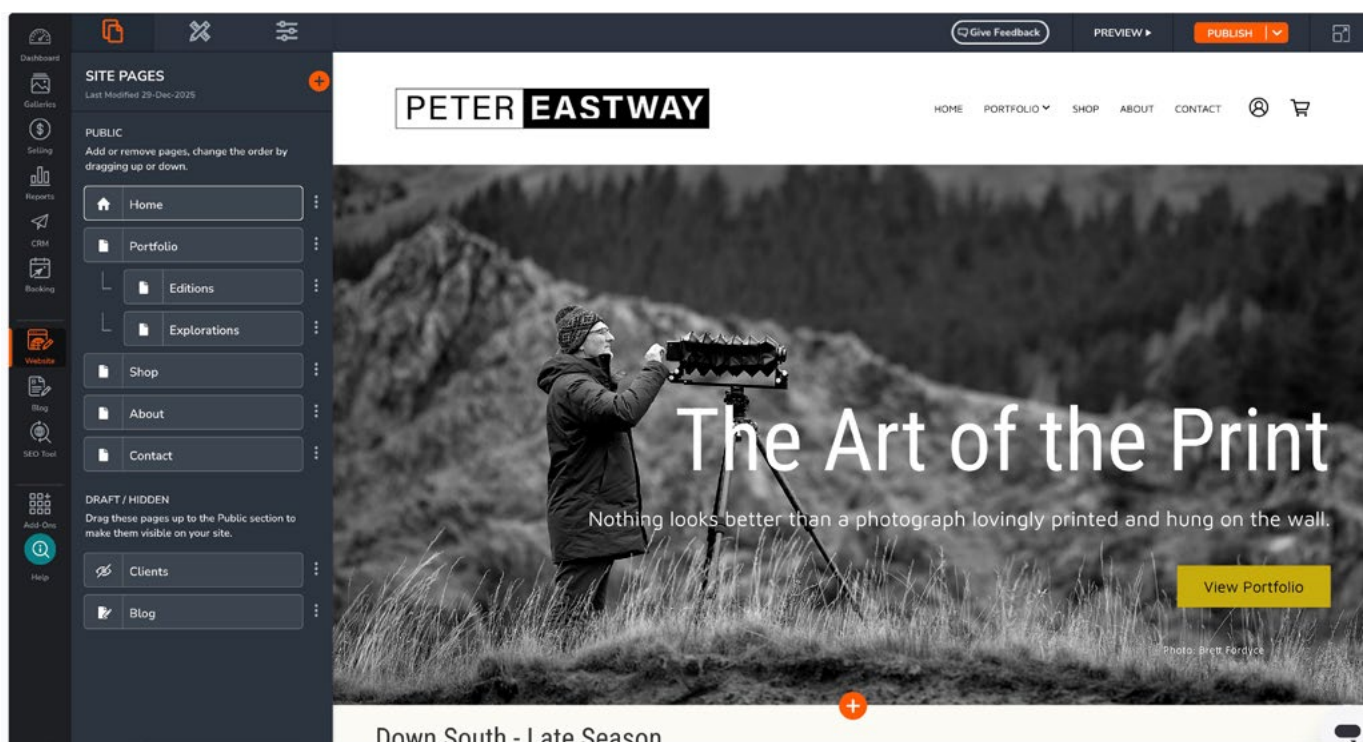
When you have a family portrait or a wedding client, there is an expectation to order photographs. Agreed that many people today only want digital files, but these can also be sold through Zenfolio if you wish. However, usually a higher profit can be generated by selling a physical print.

Similarly, if you photograph the local football club or a ballet concert (assuming you have the necessary permissions), then you have a captive market with a real incentive for parents to buy photographs of their children.

In these scenarios, the customer has a close association with the subject matter and therefore a reason to buy. You have a much better chance of making a sale.

In comparison, when someone sees your landscape or art decor print, more often than not they don't have any personal association with it. It's a beautiful image, but what reason do they have to buy it? Sometimes people are looking to decorate their home, but why should they buy your photograph instead of someone else's? Now compare someone randomly looking at your website with someone who visited an exhibition you had locally where you engaged in conversation. Now you are much more likely to make a sale because there's a personal connection.

Setting up any website is not going to generate huge sales volumes without you also getting out there and actively marketing it.



ROUNDING OUT THE WEBSITE

A website doesn't have to be a shop, but it can be so much more than a collection of photographs. Here are some suggestions to add to your website – and website builders like Zenfolio make it very simple to create new pages and a menu structure (as shown above) to guide your visitors around your site.

Bio and Purpose

Who are you? You can pick and choose what you say about yourself, but short and sweet is probably better than your life history. The more people know about you, the more they can relate to you and this connection is important for an ongoing relationship. A bio can list awards or exhibitions if you have them, or if not, it can simply be a statement explaining what you love about photography and what you're hoping to share.

Blogs

The key to a successful website is new content. Once someone has seen your website, why would they need to return? If you upload a new portfolio, that's a great reason, but not all of us have regular updates to make.

On the other hand, if you have a blog post sharing your latest exploits, this is a great reason for people to return.

Blogs don't have to be complicated. Two to three hundred words is more than enough, along with your latest photo.

What do you write about? Write about the photo – why you took it, where you took it, behind the scenes information. Read other photographers' blogs that you like, analyse their content and then use this structure to write your own, based on your material.

Video Links

I have a number of videos on Youtube and Vimeo, but no one will ever find them. In fact, they don't even know about them in the first place to do a search!

This is where your website can come in handy and it's very easy to add a video title image and link to a video. Set the link to open up in a new browser page and this way you have a better chance of keeping your viewer on your website when the video finishes!

Purchasing Information

Don't assume visitors know how to purchase your prints or even if your photos are available for purchase as a fine art, framed print. Tell them!

If you print your own files, tell people. Explain the care and attention you take to edit them, how they are printed and signed, the type of paper selected and the packaging used to post them to their door. Whatever it is you do, list it out so it shows the value in their purchase.

If you use a lab to fulfil your orders, explain this as well, singing their praises for quality printing and smart service of course.

Workshops and Other Products

Many photography websites aren't necessarily able to include products like workshops or ebooks in their shop, but there's nothing to stop you adding pages to your photo website that links through to an online store, a page to provide more advice about tours and workshops you're planning, and of course, your email address or WhatsApp address.

GETTING ON WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

PURPOSE, BELONGING, SELF-EXPRESSION

Photography doesn't have to be just a passion, it can be good for your mental health as well. By Jackie Ranken.

In this article, I want to focus on the idea of 'making the most of life' and how the continued practice of photography will help reduce the possibility of cognitive decline in later life.

They say 'it is all about balance', but as we get older, our balance requires more attention, so I say we need to make sure that we keep making the choices that count and make it a habit.

Exercising the body and the brain in a way that prioritises meaningful activities and letting go of low-value obligations is the way to go. Choose activities that stimulate your mind, rather than those that make you feel unsatisfied and stressed.

As we age, we are able to appraise situations for more positive outcomes. What might I gain or learn here? That's what I am constantly doing when I have a camera. How can I make the most of the light and subject matter at hand. How can I challenge my brain to spark new neural pathways? The practice should be mindful and therapeutic in nature.

Find a place to practise creative camera techniques; in-camera movements, multiple exposures, high key and low key photography, black and white or any technique that is out of the ordinary for you. For instance, to achieve expressive slow shutter speed effects, make sure you have a Neutral Density filter at hand or photograph in a dark place.

Any technique that moves you away from your usual centre is a good place to start and don't be negative or judgemental with yourself. Learn to play and move from one photographic technique to another until you feel satisfied.

Health Benefits of Photography

Being connected to your inner you. That part of your being that hums along to the beat of your own drum.

Finding like-minded friendships where people understand your shared love of photography.

Exercise and Mindfulness

Humans have a deep need to belong. Photography naturally creates communities where people gather and share curiosity and creativity. Camera clubs, online photography groups, photo walks, workshops and extended photography tours often bring people together who might otherwise never meet. Many photographers discover that some of their strongest friendships emerge through shared photographic experiences. Travelling together and sharing discoveries in unfamiliar places creates powerful bonds.

When you are actively looking to make photographs, you become more present. You slow down. You notice textures on walls, shapes in the ground, light falling through narrow streets, or a quiet moment between strangers. These small observations accumulate into a deeper awareness of the present moment, enriching each day as it comes.

Purpose

Photography can also provide a strong sense of purpose. We should always be prepared for serendipitous moments to arise.



Boat Waikouaiti-Otago New Zealand

EOSR5 MKII

Texture: f8, 1/320 sec, ISO 500

Boat: D6.3, 1/25 sec, ISO 500

RF 24-240mm Lens

To me, the boat is out of place, stranded and confined in a room. When I went outside, I found a log of wood with textural variations that reminded me of storm clouds. By combining the two using an in-camera multiple exposure, I was able to move the boat out of that confined space and into something more surreal and expressive.



Beach Cannibal Bay New Zealand

EOSR5 MKII
f16, 1.3 seconds, ISO 400
RF 100-400mm Lens

Using a six-stop Neutral Density filter, I slowed the shutter speed while walking along the beach. The telephoto lens compressed the scene and the movement of the camera exaggerated the sense of motion. The result reflects not just the place, but the feeling of being within it.

Photography provides endless opportunities. The possibility that some unexpected subject might appear around the next corner or a change in light might occur is what keeps the mind engaged and active.

This is where photographers often experience flow, a state where time seems to disappear and we are fully immersed in the act of creating.

With practice, the camera becomes a natural tool to express yourself. When we make photographs that we connect with, we are engaging with the world in a meaningful way and that's purpose.

Over time, we may discover ways to share that experience with others, perhaps through exhibitions, books, presentations or simply conversations that inspire people to look at the world in a different way, which in itself enriches the planet.

Self-Expression

Photography also allows us to tell our own stories. Each photographer notices different things. One person might be drawn to sweeping landscapes, another to small details on the ground, another to fleeting human gestures in a street scene. These preferences reveal something about how we experience the world. Learning to trust that perspective is part of developing both artistic confidence and personal well-being. Driving the sense of being authentically yourself. Being happy in your own skin.

Neuroplasticity and Photography

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to modify and adapt its structure and function throughout life. It responds directly to our experiences. Every time we make a creative decision, like deciding on a subject, adjusting exposure or choosing what camera technique is best for the subject, reinforces certain neural pathways.

Repetition and intention encourage the brain to strengthen these pathways, while unused camera techniques and practices will gradually fade. Photography therefore becomes more than a hobby. It becomes an ongoing dialogue between perception, emotion and decision making.

The more we practise observing the world creatively, the more naturally those patterns of seeing begin to emerge, the more we enjoy it and that keeps us healthy mentally and physically.



Drift Wood Bruce Bay – West Coast of New Zealand

EOS R5 MKII

f11, 2.5 seconds, ISO 125

RF 24-240mm Lens

To achieve a slower shutter speed in bright light, I used a ten-stop Neutral Density filter. I deliberately placed the driftwood low in the frame, allowing the sky to dominate. The composition felt slightly awkward, but that's often where the interest lies. If it feels right, trust it.

The Editing Sessions

The health benefits of photography do not stop when the trip ends. In many ways, the editing process becomes a second journey. It can be tempting to scroll quickly through your iPhone, sharing photos immediately with others, but there is much more value in slowing down, revisiting the photographs and editing them with care on your computer.

This is an opportunity to deepen the communication with yourself as well as with the viewer, by emphasising various aspects of the subject that resonate with you.

Rather than leaving those images trapped on your hard drive, we can learn new processing techniques to bring out the best in each file.

Making prints and placing them on a wall or even on the fridge allows them to become part of daily life. Why not make a slideshow with music to entertain your friends? Your

images can continue to tell their story long after the journey has ended.

Be an Artist

Art is something that you 'do'. Photography is not simply about collecting images. It is about participating in the world in a playful way. When we travel with a camera and allow ourselves to photograph what genuinely moves us, we engage our minds, stimulate our creativity and deepen our understanding of the places we visit.

A meaningful life requires us to show up each day and to remain open, to push boundaries and to allow possibilities to unfold. Photography offers us that opportunity constantly, so wherever you travel next, take your camera not just to record the destination, but to experience the world more fully. Make the photographs that matter to you.

Photography is good for your soul as well as your brain and longevity.

To illustrate this article, I have selected three recent favourite images where I feel the camera technique that I used helped me to communicate where I was and how I felt about the subject or place. The photographs were made in-camera using camera techniques and minimal Photoshop editing, but also I was having fun and most importantly, doing my thing.

High Key, Multiple Exposure and Creative Camera Movement.



THE PHOTO PROCESS PROGRAM

Take your photography to the next level with a comprehensive program that includes over 80 video tutorials, a personal feedback package and an original, signed print by Peter Eastway. The program is \$995 and can be purchased over 10 monthly payments.

Photo Process is a series of video tutorials that shares a wide range of techniques, concepts and processes that I use every time I take a photograph. These processes have evolved over 40 years of photography and while they started in the darkroom, they have been fully adapted to a modern digital workflow.

When teaching photography, I find many students have great ideas, but don't know how to implement them. Or they have great technical skills, but nothing to use them on! While I can help solve their immediate problems, the solution is relying on my skills, not theirs. And unfortunately it's not possible to transfer all of my knowledge and experience in a few hours or even days.

I'm also asked, how do I seem to immediately know what to do when I'm faced with a subject? Why do I always seem to have a solution? The answer is my 'database' of skills and influences collected throughout my career. It's my professional experience.

So how do I share this experience? The aim of Photo Process is to collect these skills, influences and experiences into a single location so they can be easily shared with photographers searching for their own answers. It's a knowledge bank of what I use when I create my photographs, so if you like how I work, the answers are in Photo Process!

Traditionally, an atelier was the private workshop or studio of a professional artist, where a number of students worked under his or her watchful eye. Professional photographers used to learn like this as well – rather than attending a college or university, they would first work as an assistant in an established studio

where knowledge and experience could be passed down. Photo Process is like an atelier in that the video tutorials are designed to provide the knowledge, while the portfolio review and print allow me to share my experience.

When you join Photo Process, you receive:

- Access to the Photo Process section of the website with over 80 video tutorials in categories – Capture, Composition, Post-Production, Influences and Output. This is a lifetime subscription, so there's no hurry to view all the content.
- A comprehensive portfolio review by Peter – you can submit up to 10 images for critique, feedback and appraisal. The written report will be presented as a PDF.
- A personally printed, signed and embossed A2 print by Peter on Canson stock using archival pigment inks from Epson – and you can select the photograph you'd like printed from his website (www.petereastway.com). The print is unframed and postage is included.

Access to the videos is immediate. You don't have to submit your portfolio or choose the photo for printing immediately – you might like to view some of the tutorials first before preparing your submission or ordering the print. Anytime is fine (but we suggest within 3 months)!

What Are The Video Tutorials Like?

And a portfolio review from me is really just an opinion. I have years of experience judging competitions and providing useful feedback, but at the end of the day,

it is just my opinion. You might not agree with all my suggestions in a portfolio review, but photographers generally find them very useful and positive.

The videos range from 5 minutes to 25 minutes, but on average they are a little under 10 minutes – so bite-sized for easy consumption.

You can watch them on your computer, your tablet or your mobile phone – you don't need a huge screen to get the most out of them. In fact, we've designed them so they can be easily viewed on your phone at any time and any where.

We host the videos on a private account with Vimeo – meaning you will be able to access the videos (through our website) from wherever you are (assuming you have internet connection) and, fingers crossed, there should be no problem with delivery. The videos cannot be downloaded.

Which Tutorials Should I Watch First?

There is a lot of content and you're not expected to view it all at once! It is a resource to call upon as the need arises, but obviously you're investing in this program to improve your photography now – so where do you start?

Most photographers have adequate capture skills, so we'd suggest starting with the Composition series. Then, once you are creating stronger photographs in camera, move onto the Post-Production series, beginning with Curves, Levels and White Balance.

More advanced students might look at 32-Bit Processing and Blend Modes in the Post-Production section and then go to Output with the aim of producing a framed print or a photo book.

Peter has provided a series of 'watch lists' for people with specific interests or at particular points in their progression as photographers. He will also reference tutorials to watch in your Portfolio Review.

What's In The Portfolio Review?

Whether beginners or experts, most of us like to hear what others think about our photographs. Hopefully it's good things, but is a portfolio review worth it?

Sometimes, reviewers and judges don't understand what we're photographing. I remember a judge criticising my photograph of a breaking wave because it had a light sheen on the top – the judge didn't realise this was the spray from the breaking wave and the main point of the photograph! I didn't blame him – he wasn't a surfer and just didn't understand what he was looking at.

On another occasion, a print of mine from Iceland was being debated for a Gold Award in New Zealand. One of the judges was just below Gold because he was concerned about a dark triangular area in the sky – it was holding him back. I hadn't noticed this area before. It wasn't bad editing because it was natural, but having seen it, I agreed with him and have subsequently adjusted the image. It was really useful to get another opinion.

It's this sort of feedback you'll receive about 10 of your images, all carefully written to put you on the right track.

About The Print

Peter's philosophy is that photography should be printed. "I don't suggest it should only be printed because most of the time, like you, I am viewing my photographs on a screen of some kind. I'm not a luddite. I'm not against social media or websites. However, I do believe that a tangible photographic print can far surpass the intangible electronic image. It is better. It can be the best!

"And to sell my message, to indoctrinate you into my way of thinking, I'd like to offer you one of my prints so you can see for yourself. I hope this print will inspire you to produce your own prints and photo books. You don't have to print them yourself as there are many printers and bureaux around the world that will do the job for you. All you need is the incentive – the influence – to turn some of your photographic files into photographic prints.

So, which photograph? Visit my personal website (www.petereastway.com) and look around. If it's a bit overwhelming, look at The New Tradition section which has 100 of my favourite photographs from my book of the same name. Choose any of the photographs for printing (excluding a very few which are subject to a limited edition which has sold out). And of course, you can always order a second or a third print – they are available in the same size for AUS \$750.

The photograph will be personally printed, signed and embossed by me on an A2 (420x594 mm) sheet of Canson Infinity paper using archival pigment inks from Epson. The print is unframed and postage is included.

10 Easy Payments

As you can see, there's a lot in the Photo Process program. It is full of valuable information and it's personalised for you. The cost is \$995, but you can also purchase it over 10 monthly payments.

For more information, please visit our website at:

www.betterphotographyeducation.com

Peter Eastway's **PHOTO PROCESS** **CREATIVE & TECHNICAL ATELIER**

Speaking Reality

As photographers, we can usually tell when someone on social media isn't an expert photographer, but when it comes to other aspects of our lives, can we be so confident? Michael Coyne challenges our perspective on truth.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle asked, "What is Truth?" He proposed the notion of Speaking Reality, which is often interpreted as meaning that truth occurs when our spoken words or mental thoughts correspond with actual reality.

Truth or Speaking Reality is something we struggle to find in the current public debate, whether it's with regard to political leaders, advertising, YouTubers, influencers or, of course, AI.

Certain politicians scorn the truth and lie about their decisions constantly, hoping that if they say something enough times it will become true and we will start to believe their falsehoods. That can work for a while until the population realises that they are being lied to by these golden messiahs and take matters into their own hands, creating conflict, uprisings or revolutions.

Many advertisements are economical with the truth, telling us we can get richer, look younger, healthier or can change our body shape with products that, at best, provide dubious





results and sometimes, unforeseen negative outcomes. A number of ads use subjective truth which allows them enough wiggle room if unhappy customers complain or try to sue the company.

Since 2005, we have spawned about sixty-nine million YouTubers who spout their opinions about every conceivable topic, including numerous channels where experts and amateurs alike assault us with their thoughts about photography and photographic equipment.

Amongst these photo aficionados are some brilliant YouTube videos which offer us great advice, excellent ideas, professional tips and wonderful examples of beautiful and exciting photography. And these are frequently given to us for free - which seems to be truly a love of the photography industry. These videos are often made by camera manufacturers, professional photographers or people who have a lifetime love of the photographic image and are searching for, or offering advice, about capturing exciting photography. But these are the gems amongst an overwhelming amount of misinformation and lack of knowledge which is fed to us by the many false prophets who spout garbage upon garbage upon garbage.

Buyer beware!

When navigating through the vast labyrinth of YouTube photo, photography and photographer sites, it's worth checking the background, photographs and bio of the person who's offering advice. It's no different to trusting and asking advice from any other professional, like a surgeon, lawyer, doctor or financier. Let's face it, you are in the search and pursuit of objective truth and knowledge in photography.

If you are a professional photographer who runs social media sites for your images and work experiences, you are an influencer. The followers on your site may not be as numerous as they are for personality-based influencers, but your images and work will inspire people to make pictures and trigger ideas for a range of techniques. The people you follow or who follow you online are usually keen participants in photography, amateur or professional. Your professional image site probably speaks more directly to purveyors and purchasers of photo products than others that focus on content creation to maximise 'clicks'.

Amongst photography influencers there are a number of people who are knowledgeable about photography. They shoot good images and have probably trained or studied photography and have the talent for passing on their skills. Often, I learn from these professionals or serious amateurs, how a new camera or lens works; I find out what the positive characteristics are in a new piece of equipment and or if there are any flaws or weak points. Frequently, a photograph is shown to demonstrate the capability of the new camera, lens or app.

Unfortunately, when scrolling through social media sites you also come across charlatans who talk the talk about photo products, but have scant knowledge about using them. They have begged, borrowed or been loaned photography equipment which is waved around in their videos while they make inane comments about a lens or camera about which they have no understanding. Sometimes they show images they've captured with the latest product, yet they are badly exposed, lack composition or any sense of meaning. This reflects sadly and badly on the product they are promoting.

This level of misrepresentation, however, pales in comparison

with that produced by AI. According to the BBC, the current war in the Middle East might have already broken the record for the highest number of AI-generated videos and images that have gone viral during a conflict. Fake images showing exploding American bases, burning high-rise buildings, bombed hotels and massive Iranian missile attacks on Tel Aviv erupted across social media. The White House even used a video which included clips from movies with scant regard for the truth.

Welcome to our brave new world of AI deception where anyone with a smart phone can produce professional fake propaganda.

When we see magazines publishing images purporting to be Nick Ut's Napalm Girl, Don McCullin's Cyprus series or James Nachtway's Rwanda photographs, will we believe they're real or think they were created by AI? Will we question the veracity of these images and the way they were created or captured by photographers risking their lives to record the devastating tragedy of conflict? AI has inserted itself so rapidly and deeply into the visual world that it's becoming harder and more challenging to convince viewers that great photographs are still being produced by photographers on the frontline of history.

Fred Ritchin, writer, educator and photographic critic, suggests we need to label images as fiction or non-fiction. In 1994, Ritchin developed a small icon which was added to the bottom of a photograph to designate whether an image had been manipulated or not, but it never really gained any traction or great usage.

Ritchin, who is the author of three books on the future of imaging, said you don't even need a camera to make a photograph because with AI it's possible to replicate a realistic photo of events and people.

We have somehow overlooked this challenge to the role of photograph as witness. And we're very close to witnessing the total destruction of photographic credibility.

AI is relatively new in history, but propaganda and misinformation have been with humanity as long as we have been slogging it out for power, property or financial gain.

During the American Civil War, both the Union and the Confederacy were using photographs as propaganda to try and sway the general public's support to their particular perspective.

In Tehran during the Iran/Iraq War, I, along with other members of the international media, was escorted to the outside of the former American Embassy to witness a crowd of people shaking their fists and chanting, "Down with America" and "Death to Israel". The group was led by a middle-aged man carrying a picture of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Everyone would shuffle around chatting and smoking until the international media appeared, upon which the people would amble into a group behind the raised image of Khomeini, stand with their backs to the US Embassy and begin a noisy, visually perfect picture show. After the media had taken their images and recorded the scene, the crowd would pack up their placards, receive their payment, get on the government buses and trundle off home until they were required for the next media performance.

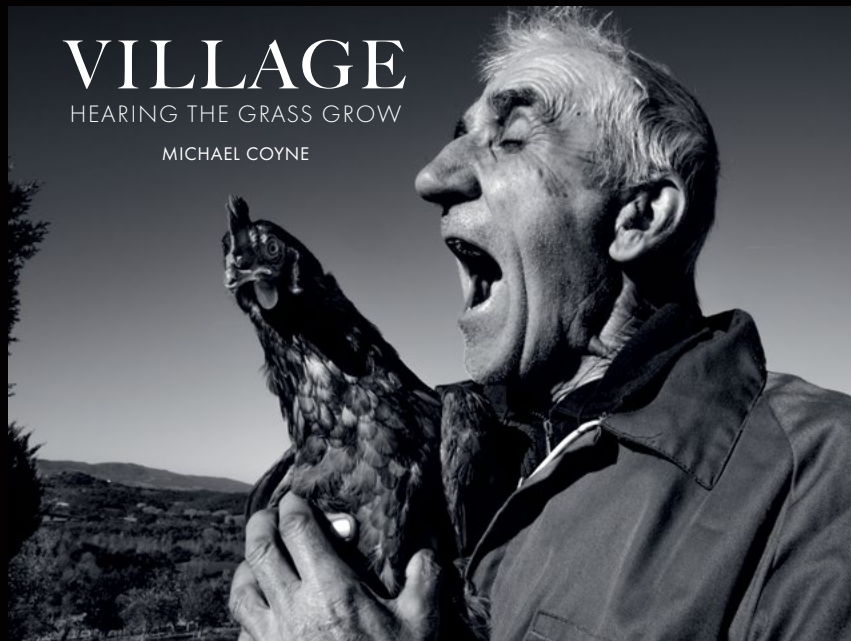
Aristotle said: "To say that that which is, is not, and that which is not, is, is a falsehood."

So, ask yourself: Is it show business, entertainment, personal gain, selective truth or Speaking Reality?

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.

"MICHAEL COYNE'S MOST RECENT BOOK IS A MASTERPIECE OF DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY."

—PETER EASTWAY, *BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE*

Order your copy now at:
<https://village-hearing-the-grass-grow.square.site/home>

TAKEN BY SURPRISE

Do you know how to incorporate the X-Factor into your photography? Murray White has some PG-rated suggestions for pushing our landscapes a little further!



OUT OF LINE

The prevalence of apparent imperfection in Nature seems only too willing to thwart reliable creative control, yet I think there is something strangely reassuring in its existence. Knowing that the natural world must continually respond to external forces in an organic way, somehow reflects a reality that we as humans seem increasingly keen to avoid. Images such as this require patience and curiosity to unravel (where does the tree end and where do the shadows begin?) and importantly, demand of us an acceptance that not everything in life is predictable, controllable or even identifiable.

How predictable is your landscape photography? Do you subscribe to a view that visual qualities such as subject arrangement, framing choices and exposure or focus decisions should have specific parameters and foreseeable results? Or do you prefer to wing it and let your environmental responses follow a more flexible pathway? There is no right or wrong answer to these questions and I guess it is reasonable (perhaps even desirable) to leave one foot in each camp. But it is worth considering what influence this chosen stance will bring to your photographic style.

I would think it likely that we mostly lean toward the safer visual option of creative stability, at least initially. A predictable approach allows us to incrementally improve our basic technique and learn from fundamental mistakes. With sufficient experience, our processes resolve to a point where we can be confident of routinely producing an acceptable image. There will be no 'defects' or any structural oversight to attract criticism.

Where is the X-Factor?

However, a reliable image, an image made to avoid controversy, is not necessarily destined to be a captivating capture. It may well be a stunning example of competent photography, but sometimes that hard-to-define 'X-factor' relies upon a more uncertain architecture and an inclination to explore the limits of what is visually possible. Interesting images often build upon the predictability of experience, then introduce an unconventional response, or surprise, as a vector for a more compelling viewer interaction.

Surprise is one way we as photographers can communicate our individual awareness of an everyday landscape. We will effectively be saying through our visual commentary, "Here is the setting, but hey, look at what moved me!" It offers us the chance to break with typical protocols by presenting an aspect of Nature that is not commonly appreciated or expected to manifest in a particular way. We can focus on a detail that appears not to



APPARITION

Unexpected possibilities that we notice as photographers can bring surprise to the viewer if we apply that same level of curiosity to our actual capture as we do in our observation. In this example, I chose a horizontal format to emphasise the homogeneous nature of this bushland, but held from view some closer trees on the right that would have better balanced the composition by visually 'containing' the main subject. I believe that this tree-fern centred between two trees, but otherwise presented in a tonally unstable setting, gives rise to many questions and interpretations.

belong, or indeed to reveal a broader setting and understanding that has been estranged from normalcy by lack of scale, an unconventional viewpoint and so on.

For example, when aerial photography as a stand-alone genre was in its infancy, Richard Woldendorp (and others) presented subjects that were familiar to us in a terrestrial sense, but could now be portrayed in a very new way. Estuarine waterways suddenly grew into tree-like etchings and cultivated farmland possessed fascinating geometric qualities on a grand scale. The surprise wasn't that these structures could not be recognised for what they were, but that they could exist in such an alien form right under our noses.

In many ways, Richard's visual expression helped fuel our contemporary enthusiasm for airborne imagery (and obviously

helped by ready access to affordable aerial drones), but I suspect it was a persistent curiosity that really drove his photography, rather than just the technique he pioneered. Curiosity is perhaps our most useful asset when it comes to assessing the landscape for possibilities. However, my pathway to exploration will be unlike yours and in turn yours will be different to the next person's. It is an entirely personal journey and one that can deliver originality as opposed to familiarity; creation rather than capture.

Doors to Discovery

Curiosity opens the way to discovery and potentially a new way of expressing ourselves. Without curiosity, it is easy to fall into a rhythm where we observe (and photograph) the most picturesque of locations, but allow that beauty to speak for us as if



OF LIFE AND LIMB

I originally framed this composition as a study in texture and tone and within the image levitated upside-down on the ground glass of my view camera, found much to enjoy. Remarkably, on the day the (generally) diffused lighting proved ideal for holding detail and for once, even the wind was mostly playing the game! Of more surprise to me, however, was how the image transitioned when it was printed the correct way up. What I originally saw from a structural point of view became more assertive in a conceptual sense. I think we photographers don't always fully connect with our work until we allow some time for any surprises of context to bubble to the surface.

we have nothing further to add. I am certainly not suggesting that there is anything inherently wrong with capturing a pretty scene, just that in most cases it will be our unique response that a viewer will react to, not only the setting itself. Our interpretation shouldn't just show a sunset, it should show our sunset.

An individual response is our way of reporting back on the landscape. We could see complexity in a leaf, for example and choose to backlight its vein anatomy as a way to emphasise this observation. We might be fascinated by the undulations in a sand dune, so reach for a wide-angle lens and crouch down super-low to explore this concept. A single dead tree may arouse our curiosity if it could be portrayed as a menacing branch structure, juxtaposed with a fluffy white cloud -- or blended in unity with a stormy sky if that alternative swung in the direction of our aesthetic compass. The possibilities for a unique or dramatic presentation are limited only by our imaginations.

However, over-zealous control in the name of creativity can lead to personal expression smothering that natural environment we have come to appreciate and may inadvertently become an investment of diminishing returns. That surprise which lurks under the skin of our landscape and

surfaces in a purposeful way, is more valuable than any contrived alternative employed just as an agent of shock value alone.

Surprise without an authentic connection is unlikely to convey a message that will resonate in a viewer's mind – at least not with the same degree of understanding.

Finding the Story

To my mind, the 'story' is an integral part of revelation in an image. By including a visual twist or unexpected connection, we actually encourage a viewer to come with us on the journey. The viewer will almost certainly wish to find out what is happening within the image and try to understand what interaction or phenomenon we have tried to reveal. As a visitor, they may not trace our footsteps exactly, but by building on the narrative with intentional visual inclusions (and exclusions), we have nonetheless left a useful trail of breadcrumbs.

It is worth considering too just why, we as the maker, have recognised something of a surprise in our image. I have found in many cases it is brought about by choosing to look into a scene for longer than is customary, or because I have identified apparent imperfection in some element of the composition. In



ON THE MOVE

There are times when choosing an unusual viewpoint can bring surprise to a viewer and encourage an alternative way of looking at a subject. This capture was made beneath the feet of a wind-blown pandanus grove and hopefully expresses a more kinetic appreciation of this tropical plant than a traditional composition pulled in at eye level might. I am not suggesting that an unorthodox viewpoint will always be a more appropriate choice, just that in looking for a meaningful interpretation we consider all of the possibilities.

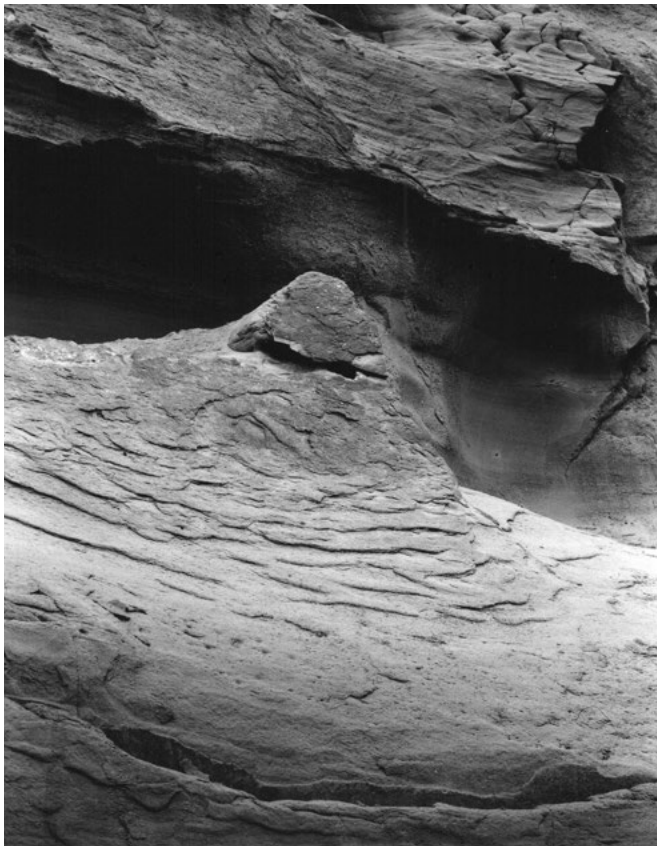
both cases the surprise is revealed because within the mundane randomness of Nature, I had not expected to find anything of interest, but some aspect of that instinctive rejection nagged at my conscience and prompted further assessment. Who was I to judge the worthiness or otherwise within the building blocks of the natural world?

Perhaps that element of surprise is entwined within our understanding of reality and our willingness to accept 'imperfection' as the norm. Our natural environment is not some Utopian masterpiece free of pictorial limitation – it is a multi-faceted compilation of entities, all of equal worth and all vying for a piece of our attention. Visual excellence as we may define it will almost certainly be found with sufficient exploration, but

THE ROLE MODEL

One of photography's most compelling characteristics is its ability to convey a concept that can be returned to and digested over time. This image has juxtaposed two subjects that in the ordinary course of events would unlikely be compared. But by isolating them through a precise viewpoint and focusing attention on their obvious differences, we can set the scene for a more subtle appreciation of their similarities – and the longer we observe, the more surprising (and intimate) the relationship can become.





CAVE DWELLER

Sometimes the surprise in a photograph (or in the field when observing the natural world) remains completely hidden until a conceptual switch in our mind suddenly changes our perspective. This particular image may offer a textural study to those on that wavelength, or an uneasy composition devoid of any obvious centre of attraction to others. Assessments along these lines (among others) are entirely understandable, as we each respond in our own unique way, with our individual values and interpretations. For someone having a particular interest in anthropomorphic studies, this image holds multiple possibilities for me and I enjoy the transition from reality to a more mystical alternative.

those alternative versions, those 'less than optimal' compositions that occupy so much of our landscape, are not necessarily without value.

Considerable Merit

For example, let's assume that a quintessential sunset will be defined by a golden orb balanced perfectly above a blue ocean. Does that mean any patchy cloud cover should be discounted as it will ruin the symmetry? Should we avoid a rogue wave breaking in front because the moment no longer fits our preordained model of serenity? Would yacht sails positioned on one side of the composition be distracting to the point of image failure? Sure, the archetypal sunset may be desirable initially, but is it possible that unexpected variations have their own charm and can continue to surprise us long after the classic version ceased being as novel?

There is considerable merit to be found in just going with the flow and working with anything and everything that causes us to stop and think. Like all spheres of endeavour, photographic innovation does not follow convention – true innovation rarely builds on convention, it occurs when individuals such as ourselves break with tradition and experiment without externally applied limits. Of course we'll make plenty of 'mistakes', but sometimes the 'error' snowballs into a new mindset and what



CLAW BACK

Often what remains invisible in a picture holds more intrigue than that which prompted our curiosity in the first place. In this instance, large blocks of almost featureless rock crowd our eyes into the central band of high contrast action. In a traditional critique we could acknowledge a certain echoing of shape and tonal transition, but to me this image speaks primarily of uncertainty. What is happening in the shadows and what entities are yet to appear? As with a Hitchcock film, sometimes the shock of most value is not what is revealed, but what is implied.

was once seen as a limitation morphs into a less predictable, but more rewarding agenda.

I think sometimes we spend too much time trying to control the obvious inputs of a scene, rather than concentrating on those outputs that seem to fly under the radar of traditional assessments. If the lighting is considered too harsh for a delicate setting, could it be that a high contrast version might open our minds to a more assertive expression? If a tree branch intrudes on our scene, should we look for a different viewpoint to sanitise the composition, or could we build on this opportunity to surprise our viewers? These are questions that have no binary answer, but working through them thoughtfully can help us to inject individuality and meaning into our work.

For me, an image that expresses the spirit of our landscape through precise composition, sympathetic lighting and a commitment to detail confirms that the photographer's vision has resonated with the setting. I find much to appreciate in a capture of this kind where the photographer exhibits an ability to deeply empathise with Nature and produces a flawless tribute to its compelling attributes.

However, I am curious whether holistic success in photography can be attributed through a lack of criticism alone. Could it be that visual intrigue and the role of surprise may broaden the interpretation of landscape and enhance our definition of success?



ACROBAT

Although variations of this subject matter are commonplace across Australia, it sometimes takes a photograph to emphasise just how temporal and unstable our geology can be. By utilising direct lighting, tight framing (and a rather awkward viewpoint!), I have tried to capture a little of the spectacle. I guess in a photographic sense we could acknowledge something of the tonal characteristics and design inherent to the print, but surely its surprise (that unexpected defiance of gravity itself) is the more powerful visual element.

A Tree, A Blade of Grass. A Desert, A Grain of Sand.

Mike Langford suggests when you are out in the landscape, try thinking inside the big picture to see what sort of visual rabbit hole you can go down.

You may be surprised by how exciting that adventure can become!

Earlier this year, Jackie and I went to Morocco to do a reconnaissance for a tour we are running at the end of the year. We figured that the best part of the tour would be on the eastern side of the Atlas Mountains, at the edge of the Sahara Desert; where we were to spend a couple of nights staying in a desert camp near the town of Merzouga.

The area is known for the gigantic sand dunes, called the Erg Chebbi Dunes.

To get to the overnight camp, we first had to endure a two-hour camel ride across the dunes. Initially, I thought that photographing from the back of a camel would give me a more exciting perspective from which to work, as my original idea was simply to photograph the endless sea of dunes tumbling

off into infinity. In my mind, all I could see were the soft, rolling and overlapping curved lines of dune after dune, flowing to the distant horizon.

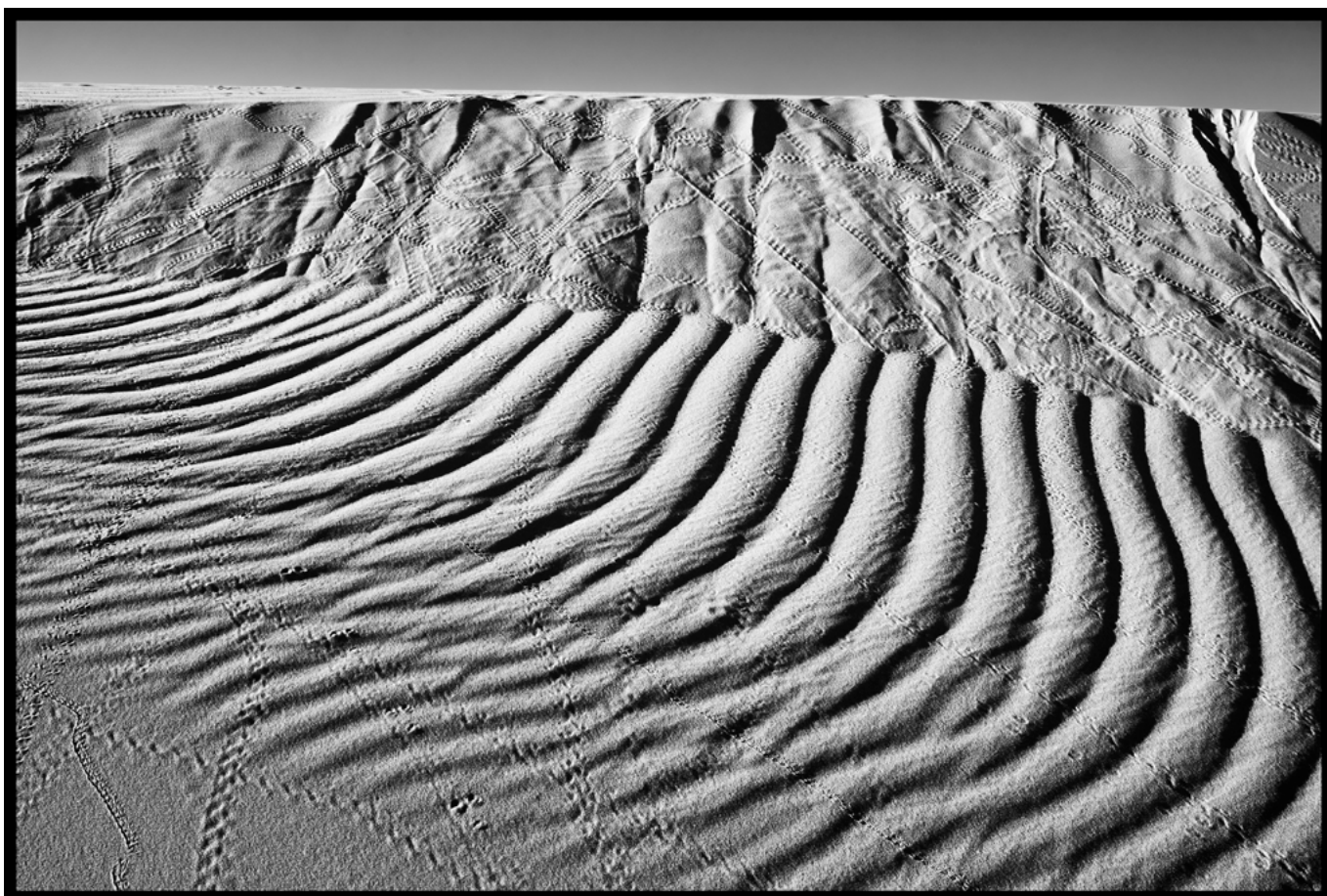
Initially and emotionally, everything looked clean and untouched by man. It was a clichéd vision of being off in the wilderness, alone with my thoughts and imagination, while sitting gracefully atop a camel.

Below: Shadows

f11, 1/2000 sec, ISO 800, Canon R5, 24-105mm Canon lens @ 32mm

An attempt at something artistic while riding the camel. The Algerian border is visible in the far distance, but the most significant thing is the constant intrusion of tyre tracks and footprints in the sand.





Tracks & Patterns

f14, 1/160 sec, ISO 320, Canon R5, 24-105mm Canon lens @ 35mm

Even though this is quite a busy photograph, it captures the imagination and encourages you to spend time exploring what is happening within the frame. To my mind, this is the most successful photograph I created while going down the rabbit hole in the desert. Thank you Jackie!

Not!

When you first look at a landscape, you only see what you want to see; your own imagination, your fantasy of what you think it should look like, or what you expected it to look like.

It was only when my romantic haze started to clear that I began to see the reality of where I was. I started to notice all the marks created by tourists that cover almost everything in sight. I tried my best to avoid them through lens choice and selective

framing, but eventually I gave in and accepted that the dream wasn't the reality.

There really were footprints everywhere. There really were tyre tracks from four-wheel-drive vehicles and quad bikes everywhere. I even started to hear and smell the vehicles coming and going all around me.

"Oh, the serenity of it all," I said to myself, mockingly!

And don't even think about photographing while riding

Below: Erg Chebbi Dunes

f11, 1/2000 sec, ISO 800, Canon R5, 24-105mm Canon lens @ 32mm

A capture taken while riding on a camel to our overnight desert camp at the Erg Chebbi Dunes. At first I thought I had managed to pick a spot devoid of tyre tracks, but as you can see, that wasn't the case.





Above: Desert Camp

f11, 1/600 sec, ISO 800, Canon R5, 24-105mm Canon lens @ 105mm

Taken while on the back of a camel, which explains the high shutter speed and ISO. You can see that the closer we get to the camp, the more marks of human activity appear in the sand.

a camel. The lurching and tossing is so extreme that it's very difficult to create a frame that makes much sense until you eventually stop moving. Even when you dismount to photograph, it can take several minutes before your bum, legs and feet muscles function properly again!

Fortunately for me, one of my other photographic loves is what I refer to as 'Manscapes', man-made objects in the



environment. So, the next morning I headed out with that idea and started photographing the marks of man in the sand as artistically as possible. I did this by getting down low with a wide-angle lens and letting the light skim across the surface of the sand, creating deep shadows and crisp highlights.

Below: Quad Bike Tracks

f14, 1/400 sec, ISO 320, Canon R5, 24-105mm Canon lens @ 39mm

The low shooting angle makes the scene slightly unfamiliar and perhaps more intriguing. Converting it to black and white adds to this visual ambiguity and shifts it from a photograph of a track into something you might expect to see hanging in a gallery.





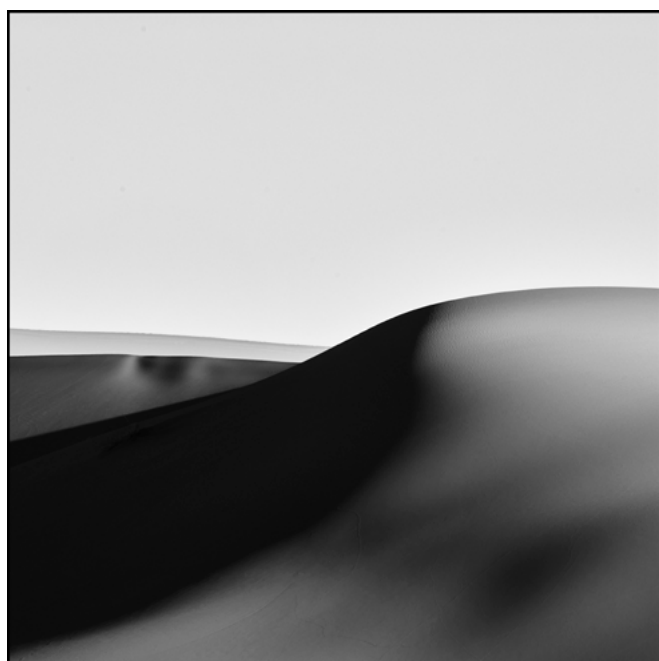
Above: Morning Camel Trains

f18, 1/120 sec, ISO 320, Canon R5, 24-105mm Canon lens @ 105mm

Even though this is a reasonably successful image, I could have removed all the tyre tracks with Photoshop to try and make it look better. However, that would have changed the reality, so I left them there in the hope that would tell an even better story.

The best example is a photograph I made of quad bike tracks breaking the crest of a sand dune. At the time, I was very mindful that there could soon be another following in the same tracks, but luckily that didn't happen.

I also photographed a camel train returning to the town in the early morning light, after dropping off their loads of tourists the night before. It was something that looked sort of natural, but then again, it was only because of tourists that they were there at all.



Erg Chebbi Dunes 2

f16, 1/200 sec, ISO 320, Canon R5, 100-500mm Canon lens @ 500mm

The use of a long lens and as much depth-of-field as possible helps this composition work. Converting the image to black and white also helps, transforming it from a photograph of sand dunes into something that feels more like a piece of fine art, even if I do say so myself.



Combining the camel train with the tyre tracks in the sand, told both the romantic story of the camel train as well as the reality of other forms of transport in the desert.

The Details Within

Once I accepted the reality of man-made marks across this environment, I experienced yet another small cosmic shift in my perception of where I was that morning.

Given the low angle of the light, I started to notice small areas within the dunes that were actually completely devoid of man's influence. These weren't big picture scenes, these were small areas that I could only isolate with a telephoto lens.

This is where a long lens becomes invaluable in landscape photography, not for compression alone, but for isolating small visual relationships within the larger scene.

These spaces held the subtlety of light falling across curved shapes, creating gentle transitions of tone and shade. They were minimal in character and showed me another way of seeing that was a long way removed from my original thoughts about how I might photograph the desert.

As I started isolating these small areas within the dunes, I realised that I was unconsciously following a visual path that I had first encountered years ago in a book by the Japanese photographer Shinzo Maeda; who I mentioned in my previous article for *Better Photography*. His book 'A tree, A Blade Of Grass' starts with the all-encompassing broader landscape and ends up focusing on the details within it.

I was now applying that same philosophy to my vision in the Moroccan desert.

However, the most significant moment of that morning came from Jackie, when she pointed out the thousands of tiny trails left on the sand by the overnight wanderings of dung beetles, centipedes and many other little critters.

This is what I refer to as the figurative 'Blade of Grass / Grain of Sand' moment. Her observation gave me the perfect ending for the sequence of 'big picture to small picture' that I needed.

Here was yet another way of seeing, another visual reality that was right at my feet and one I hadn't even considered. This is one of the reasons I enjoy travelling with other photographically-minded people. Life is at its best when it's shared and when ideas are shared.

It's a wonderful thing to give, and just as beautiful to receive.

CREATIVE DROP

Len Metcalf is on fire. Well, on some days he's more on fire than others

– can you make this work for you too?

Have you ever noticed that after a particularly creative day, one of those days when you are totally focused on creating art and absolutely everything seems to be going so well, that the next day or even the next few days aren't very good? Perhaps there is even a period after finishing a big wonderful creative project or even a trip and you have felt down for a period of time afterwards? I certainly have. It is worth exploring this widespread phenomenon to understand what is happening. It is good to know it might happen and what to do when it does.

Recent research shows that this is common with many professional artists, but less common with amateur or hobbyist



ones. I suspect the difference is the driver of desire versus professional pressures. But it may also point to how deeply you get into your art making. The research on artists' hangovers is scant and doesn't provide much advice or understanding. So in this article, I will dive into some other areas that do have evidence-based knowledge to see if that can help us understand what is going on and how to deal with it when it happens. I don't think it can be mitigated, as I believe it is a natural process. It is part of the usual ups and downs of a creative life.

Sub Drop and Top Drop

In the fetish and kink (BDSM) community, there is a well-researched phenomenon called drop. More specifically sub drop and top drop. This happens straight after a play scene, from between 12 and 36 hours afterwards. During a play scene, something fun, sexual and intense, our bodies naturally release a wide variety of neurochemicals. These vary between individuals and activities, but include endorphins, dopamine, oxytocin, adrenaline (epinephrine), noradrenaline, anandamide, serotonin and cortisol. After they have been released, depending on how much is released, they take time to replenish. It is during this replenishment that people have their emotional and physical drops.

In a previous article I wrote for *Better Photography*, 'Peak Photographic Experiences', published in 2017, I talked about flow states, the release of these neurochemicals and the high they can give us. I outlined two specific examples, one in South Africa in the Richtersveld and the other in Hopewell, on the Marlborough Sound at the tip of the south island of New Zealand. To summarise and simplify now, these peak experiences left me high and feeling very stoned from the creative act. Elated, happy, bubbly and excited all describe a natural high. The term 'peak experience' comes from Maslow, in his 1964 book *Religions, Values and Peak Experiences*.



Mistress Kalyss Mercury surrenders to Amber Ella-Vatrix to take some time out and relax from her usual role of professional Mistress. She is internationally known and renowned as a tantric domina. Here we see her surrender to Amber in erotic rope, known as Shibari and sensual dominance. Both of these amazing women teach tantra, kink and BDSM, in Australia and internationally. Surrendering is an incredible way to relax, as your mind disappears into total presence, the same state we seek in meditation and in the flow state. Amber teaches Shibari and consent as well.



In the flow state, the term coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in *Flow* in 1990, a seminal book on the psychology of optimal experience and creativity, we clearly are talking about creatives who go into a trance-like state whilst making art. This is characterised by the loss of self-consciousness and an altered sense of time.

Peak experiences, creativity, nature and going into a flow state can all induce a natural high. This is well researched.

Melting Into Computers

How many of us have gone into the darkroom after dinner in the early evening and emerged in the morning in daylight, not noticing the time, or the night disappeared because we were so involved in making that perfect print? Or perhaps today's digital photographers melt into their computers, processing their digital images for hours. Perhaps you are on holidays and you start photographing. Hours have gone by and you have skipped a meal or two; you have disappeared into your art making.

When we go into peak experiences, into flow states, when we put our souls, mental concentration, emotional focus and our physical bodies into states of deep creative focus, our bodies release a mix of these neurochemicals. This helps us focus and work harder.

They keep us working, they reward us and make us feel good so we can keep going. Like our creative energy, they run out, become depleted and we need rest and time to recover. In a normal day this is called sleep. But when we have these huge days when more neurochemicals are released than on a usual day, they need more time to replenish than just an eight-hour sleep. They may even need days.

Just to be clear, each of us will release and use different neurochemicals in different amounts depending on what we are doing. So we each will experience this differently, because it is a cocktail of neurochemicals. So depending on who we are, what we are making or creating, how we create, how intense our creativity is, we will all experience the after effects differently.



Neurochemicals

Let's quickly look at each neurochemical:

Dopamine is the reward neurotransmitter, surging during pleasurable or intense experiences. It reinforces the desire to repeat the experience. It's the one that algorithms are tuned to release when you hit like or make comments on social media. It boosts motivation, makes us more focused and helps with pattern recognition. Its depletion leads to fatigue, low motivation and depressive feelings. It typically stabilises within 24 hours, though through prolonged depletion we may take one to three days for full receptor sensitivity to return. So dopamine depletion contributes to fatigue and a low mood, but will return after a few days.

Serotonin plays a central role in regulating mood, sleep, appetite, cognition and digestion. It gets released with sunshine, meditation, mindfulness, nicotine and carbohydrate consumption. Importantly, it gets released with creativity and art making. Low serotonin levels contribute to anxiety, irritability and low mood. They can take one to three days to rebalance and for the mood shifts and irritability to go.

Oxytocin is known as the bonding hormone, the love drug. It is released during touch and intimacy. It is also released during the emotional connection we have with our subjects and most importantly, our art. It is also released during rhythmic and repetitive body movements. It is released in novel and positive environments. It has a half-life of about three to five minutes, but the effects last longer because they are bound to receptors. Despite the rapid clearing of them in our system, the oxytocin hangover often peaks between 24-72 hours afterwards.

Norepinephrine is the hormone that sharpens our focus. It increases alertness, it sharpens our perception during profound experiences. It gets released in stress and perceived danger scenarios. It is also released during physical activity and with postural changes. It will make our nervous system hypersensitive for many hours, with full autonomic balance being restored in 12 - 24 hours. While we are depleted of norepinephrine we will have low energy, fatigue, have poor concentration, brain fog, low blood pressure, perhaps even depression, low moods, sleep



disturbances and even ADHD symptoms of inattention and a lack of focus.

Endorphins contribute to pain relief and feelings of euphoria, mostly from peak physical and emotional states. Endorphins, whilst reducing pain, also induce euphoria and a sense of effortlessness. Endorphins are metabolised quickly, are replenished quickly and you are usually restored in a couple of hours.

Anandamide is an endogenous cannabinoid transmitter, called the 'bliss molecule', due to its role in mood, pain and euphoria. It contributes to feelings of calm, pleasure and timelessness. This is replenished relatively quickly, in 30 to 60 minutes, though full functional recovery may take a few hours.

Adrenaline (epinephrine) and noradrenaline can be released during high engagement or very stressful environments. They are directly linked to attention and cognitive

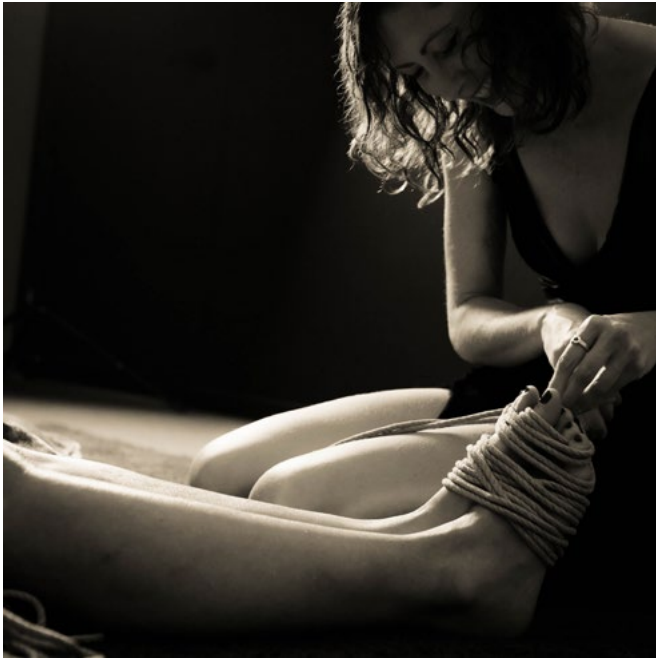
flexibility. Noradrenaline is particularly important as it supports divergent thinking and phasic bursts. When we deplete these we have symptoms such as fatigue, low blood pressure, poor concentration and low mood. These can take up to seven days to replenish.

Other neurochemicals such as cortisol can also be released that I haven't discussed here, but they may also play around with our creative drop.

Magical Highs

So as you can see, the highs we get from our art making and creativity can come at a cost to us. It is important to note that these chemicals, using them and replenishing them, is a very normal and healthy function in humans.

In no way am I advocating stopping making art or putting our creativity in some box in the corner to avoid this roller



coaster of emotions. I think this is why we love art making so much. It is why we love going out to photograph. Why some of us love putting ourselves at risk while we make art. One of my students would put on his runners and go out

ADVICE FOR CREATIVITY RECOVERY

- Acknowledging that you are going through this, is the first important step.
- Name it. I am feeling 'creative drop' or I am in an 'artistic hangover'. Labelling our feelings helps us process them and address them appropriately.
- Allow time for your body and mind to integrate the experience.
- Rest, healthy food and hydration has to be top of the list. If our bodies are stressed, giving them lots of water and healthy food will always speed up the process of recovery. Eat protein rich foods, such as meat, fish, eggs and nuts. Drink water.
- Sleep. Make sure you get adequate sleep, seven to nine hours per night.
- Exercise, go for a gentle walk.
- Practice mindfulness or meditation to regulate stress and support dopamine recovery.
- Spend time in nature and in sunlight.
- Avoid stimulants and depressants, such as alcohol, drugs and excessive sugar.
- Use relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, yoga, stretching.
- Listen to music or engage in enjoyable activities.
- Limit screen time and digital stimulation.
- Journal and reflect to process emotions.
- Spend time with supportive people.
- Engage in low stakes, playful creativity without pressure or expectations.

photographing the seedier corners of the city at night, for example. The runners were obviously for a quick getaway if things went sour.

For me, these highs are the reason I make art. We wouldn't understand or identify with these highs without the contrast of the lows. They make us who we are.

With these magical highs, there are clear depressive lows. Life comes in waves and is never steady. Your mind needs time to process, integrate and recover. Your body needs to rest, replenish and rejuvenate.

Now what?

What to do after an intense art making session, amazing trip or period of intense creativity?

The answer is rather simple and that is a period of self-care, self-love and gentleness on ourselves. Take the time to allow your body to recover. You will get back to the normal you had just before you started making the art.

If it can take up to three days to replenish these neurochemicals, give yourself all the time you need to recover. It might even take you a week or two to fully recover. I sometimes think it is okay to take months to recover too, depending on the intensity and length of the endeavour.

We put so much into our art making, that we end up paying the price afterwards. Let's learn to identify what is happening, label it and then look after ourselves as we recover.

Many of us will create for months without any signs of creative drop, as we keep our creativity at the pleasurable and stress-free end of the creative spectrum. But if you are like me and dive into everything with gay abandon and with all of my energy and enthusiasm, then when I get high as a kite on my art making, I have to embrace the self-care and recuperation needed afterwards. I happily give myself the time to recover. Down time. Before starting again.

Art making should be an emotional, physical and rewarding experience.

"You haven't dried up your well of creativity, you've overworked your creative muscle," said Nathalie Graham.

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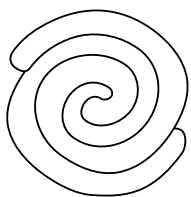
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