

RESULTS: PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

\$29.95

ISSUE 125
SPRING 2026

Better Photography

PROJECTS,
PORTFOLIOS
AND LOTS
OF IDEAS!



CRAIG MCGOWAN'S QUIET ACHIEVEMENTS • LEN METCALF'S FAVOURITE BOOKS

STUART WESTMORE'S TRAVEL BUG • RAOUL IACOMETTI'S DANCE AND WIND



KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Peter Eastway

LOCATION: Port Leopold, Somerset Island, Nunavut, Canada

CAMERA: Fujifilm GFX100S II, GF20-35mmF4 R WR

EXPOSURE: 1/60 second @ f11, ISO 80

SITUATION: One of my favourite subjects is the 'hand of man' found in otherwise wilderness landscapes. The Arctic weather is not kind to small outposts like these and there is a separate series in the weathered woodwork and flaking paint. However, what appeals to me is the remote and desolate location in which this hut finds itself abandoned, the last remnants of snow visible both on the shore and in the hills around. Access to locations like this is not easy and invariably I am travelling with a group (this was with Aurora Expeditions) – which means a few straggling visitors had to be removed from the final composition.





KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Janet Aldridge

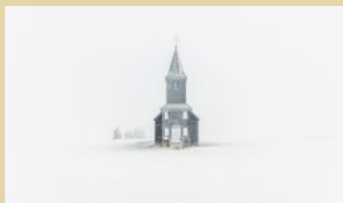
LOCATION: Paradise Bay, Antarctica

CAMERA: Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, Canon EF 16-35mm f/4L IS USM

EXPOSURE: 1/400 second @ f8, ISO 400

SITUATION: While travel brochures invariably depict bright blue skies and warm sunshine down in Antarctica, when it comes to photographing icebergs, you can produce a much more emotive and evocative outcome with low cloud cover and no wind. This is what Janet Aldridge discovered on a voyage to Antarctica hosted by the editor Peter Eastway. Sitting on a large Zodiac, floating quietly through the ice, Janet waited for the elements to align, the iceberg with the mountain behind and, serendipitously, a bird flew into frame which acts as a centre of interest and holds the composition neatly together.





Cover photo by Craig McGowan.
See article on page 12.

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Better Photography is a special
interest photography magazine
published quarterly by Pt 78 Pty
Limited ABN 75 003 152 136, PO Box
351, Collaroy Beach NSW 2097.
Phone: (02) 4388 6851
Web: www.betterphotography.com

The cover price of \$29.95 is the
maximum recommended retail
price only.

The magazine is printed by Carbon8,
Sydney, Australia.

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Photo by Craig McGowan. Full story page 12

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Photo by Len Metcalf. Full story page 94

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We take a close look at an amazing project produced by photographer Raoul Iacometti and dancer Rebecca Erroi – it's an inspirational story!



Photo by Lisa Leach. Full story page 56



Photo by Tracey Squire. Full story page 50

Leica SL3-P

Leica's SL-System was introduced back in 2015, so it's no newcomer to the full-frame mirrorless sector, but its latest model is appended with the single letter 'P'. Why not a new number?

We're told the new SL3-P is all about performance and while on paper they might be minor tweaks, we're sure existing SL owners will be looking very closely. So, what's improved? At the heart of the SL3-P's features are a new sensor and a new hybrid autofocus system. The 44-megapixel BSI full-frame sensor has a dynamic range of up to 14 EV, allowing it to retain plenty of shadow (or highlight) detail. A Multishot mode delivers extremely high-resolution images up to 176 megapixels. And the ISO range of 50 to 200,000 ensures flexibility in challenging lighting conditions.

The new hybrid autofocus system combines three focus technologies – phase detection (PDAF), depth mapping (object detection AF) and contrast detection (contrast detection AF) – to achieve quick, precise and reliable focusing. With continuous shooting at up to 40 frames per second including full autofocus support, improved tracking performance with 819 AF points and smart subject recognition, the SL3-P can handle most subjects with ease.

In terms of video, the SL3-P enables recording at resolutions of up to 8K. This includes 8.1K Open Gate in 3:2 format at up to 30p, HDMI RAW 8K Open Gate and 8K at 30p using the full size of the sensor. For smooth motion rendering, the camera offers 5.9K recording at up to 60 frames per second, as well as detailed slow-motion footage in 4K at 120p. Integration of the Apple ProRes codec at up to 5.8K and two new in-camera LUTs – LeicaPure and Leica Cine – for the L-Log colour space shows, Leica is serious about its video quality too.

Manufactured in Germany, the SL3-P features a deliberately minimalist design with black control elements and without the red Leica logo. Its solid, full-metal body ensures maximum stability and reliability, while IP54 certification provides effective protection against dust and water splashes.



Sony α7R VI

At just under \$7000 for the body, you'd be expecting some important improvements on the latest α7R series. With a fully-stacked 66.8MP Exmor RS image sensor, the new α7R VI delivers high image quality resolution with readout speeds up to 5.6x faster, which will be of great interest to wildlife and sport photographers looking to capture the peak of the action. The new camera offers 30 fps bursts at full resolution, 4K 60p without cropping, expanded dynamic range and reliable low-light AF.

The upgrades rely on the BIONZ XR2 engine with an integrated AI processing unit delivering dramatic improvements in image and sound quality, power management and responsiveness. High-speed processing enables up to 60 AF/AE calculations per second, blackout-free shooting and 8K video, while the integrated AI processing unit enhances subject recognition and illumination.

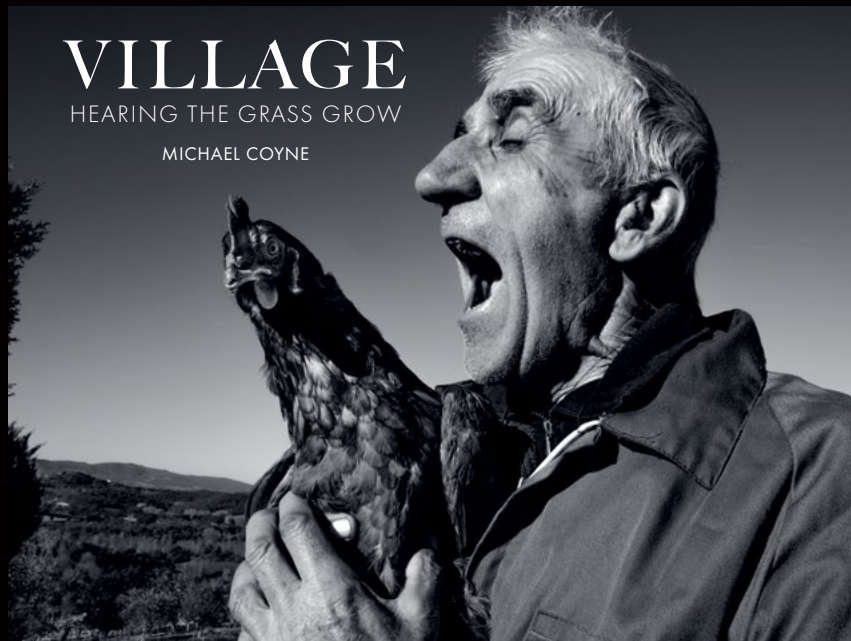
Sony claims up to 16 stops of dynamic range at lower ISO settings, a big claim that only medium format has made until now. A [Compressed (HQ)] raw format has been added, providing lightweight raw files that enable continuous shooting while maintaining high image quality. There are also three composite raw modes: [Pixel Shift Multi] mode creates composites with extremely high resolution, [NR Shooting] produces low-noise images and [Shooting for HDR] captures images with a wide dynamic range. In addition, Extended RAW offers two image-enhancing functions: [Extended Hi-Res], which boosts the pixel count of captured images by a factor of four to approximately 270-megapixels and [Extended NR] for high noise reduction with full resolution. So, there're lots of reasons to believe the new α7R VI is a serious medium format competitor and, in terms of just being a very functional workhorse, its feature list is very impressive. Worth a closer look if you're a Sony fan.



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>

Adobe to Acquire Topaz

Having seen big companies take over smaller, more nimble competitors before, it can be very good for the 'target' owners and stockholders, but it can also turn our capitalist society into one of oligopolies (apologies to the real economics student) and less choice for us, the consumers.

Is choice necessary? Not if the product you are getting does a great job and I don't think anyone who uses Lightroom or Photoshop would argue for a moment that these are seriously great apps. Sure, we can bitch and moan about things here and there, but seriously, these apps are excellent.

But not perfect at everything. Topaz Labs creates apps that do a better job than Photoshop and Lightroom in some key areas such as noise reduction, sharpening and resizing. And it costs us extra to purchase these apps – but many of us do it because the results speak for themselves! So, what will happen now that Adobe has announced its intended acquisition of Topaz? Will the Topaz apps remain as stand-alone products or be integrated into Photoshop and Lightroom? Both approaches have been used by Adobe in the past.

However, reading the official press release, we think we are being a little myopic in our outlook. One of the reasons Topaz is so successful as a product is its use of AI and perhaps this is the technology (or the staff) that Adobe is hoping to acquire. AI is making huge inroads to imaging and video, so it makes sense for Adobe to cement its position this way, especially since Lr and Ps are just two of dozens of Adobe products.

Stated Adobe, "Topaz Labs brings deep expertise in optimising large, complex AI models to run directly on devices, a capability that will allow Adobe to deliver faster, more responsive creative experiences for customers and make advanced AI more accessible and cost effective for creatives."

We observe with interest!



Capture One for Hasselblad

Time seems to have a way of fixing most things, if you have the time to wait! For instance, Hasselblad raw files can now be processed in Capture One, something that would have been unheard of a decade ago!

Why? When Phase One first entered the medium format market 20 odd years ago, its main competitor was Hasselblad. They both made medium format digital backs, but only Hasselblad also made cameras. However, Phase One seemed to be the better digital back and Hasselblad found it selling cameras without backs. Their solution was to change the design of their cameras so they could not have a Phase One back attached. This in turn affected Phase One because suddenly a large proportion of its market disappeared – their solution was to acquire Mamiya and make their own cameras.

Both Hasselblad and Phase One developed software to process their raw files and, not surprisingly, the software didn't support the competitor's raw files! And depending on which side of the fence you sat, this was a pity as Capture One became a very powerful tool.



Also in the dim distant past, Phase One sold off Capture One as a separate entity, so while Capture One still directly supports processing Phase One files, it also processes most other camera manufacturers' files as well. And now, just recently, Hasselblad.

According to Capture One, "We've partnered with Hasselblad to bring native support for your medium-format raw files. For the first time, you can now import, organise and develop your .3FR files directly in our software. Support starts with three of Hasselblad's 100-megapixel models: the X2D II 100C, the X2D 100C and the CFV 100C digital back. Custom colour profiles for each camera and dedicated lens profiles for Hasselblad XCD lenses mean Hasselblad's colour rendering is faithful from the moment you import. Tethered support is coming later this year."

If Hasselblad and Phase One can be reconciled in this way, maybe there's hope for the world as a whole!

New Zealand South Island CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

Small Groups: Maximum six

Tutors: **Jackie Ranken & Mike Langford**

2026 Workshop Dates

Oct 15 - 20 South West Wilderness

2027 Workshop Dates

March 14 - 20 The Catlins
May 4 - 11 Chatham Islands
May 19 - 25 North West Wildernss
June 16 - 22 Historic Central Otago
July 22 - 27 Mt Cook/Mackenzie



Creative Photography Books
NZ\$40 each + postage
See web site for details



The Catlins



North West Wilderness



Central Otago



Chatham Island



Mt Cook/ Mackenzie



South West Wilderness

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All camera brands are welcome

www.qccp.co.nz, E-mail: mikelangford@xtra.co.nz PH +64 276722733



Craig McGowan

Quiet Achievements



Above: Early Light Patagonia

Image taken on my first overseas workshop over a decade ago. It displays my like of broad vistas and bold landscapes. Capturing the amazing scene that was in front of me and showcasing it electronically was (and in many cases, still is), challenging to achieve. Back then, composition was given little thought, with even lesser consideration to format and format ratio in which the processed image would be viewed.

Above right: Broken Moeraki

A bit over 10 years ago, I had (I thought) successfully captured the Moeraki Boulders before and during sunrise on the beach. I took many images with many different compositions. Satisfied with my lot, I commenced walking off the beach only to see this broken boulder. Why photograph the broken boulder when so many undamaged spherical boulders were present, I asked myself? The seawater it contained from the previous tide reflected the sky, the backdrop of the sky was still maintaining its colours and the broken boulder sat just where the current tide was reaching. I set up my gear again and the resulting image became my favourite from that morning's shoot. It was also one of my earliest successes in an international photography competition.



There is a high level of refinement in Craig McGowan's work. Quietly spoken, he is more than happy to spend whatever time it takes to get his files looking exactly as he needs them. He realises that quick edits are not for him, at least not for his award winning photographs which have been acknowledged and acclaimed around the world, including the 2020 Landscape Category winner in the Sony World Photography Awards and the Landscape Photographer of the Year category winner in the Australian Photographic Prize in 2024 and 2025.

It's interesting to read how Craig has approached photography, using workshops, printing and competitions to take his work to the next level.

Insight

Begins Craig, "As a 16-year-old, I commenced my photographic journey with a fully manual 35mm SLR: an Olympus OM-1. I taught myself photography with the assistance of books from my local library. It was very much trial and error, coupled with delayed results whilst waiting for negatives to be developed and images printed. Then decades passed as life – work, family and daily activities - ceased any form of photography."

Ceased, but not forgotten. While Craig works in a profession where photography is an integral component, he has never been a working photographer, but he has always kept that interest, that spark for images. "It was around 15 years ago that I purchased my first DSLR camera and reconnected with the medium. My employer is singularly Nikon and as I had contemporary exposure to their systems, it was a straightforward choice for my own kit.

"But as someone who does not earn a living from photography, I enjoy the freedom this delivers. My photography is for me, not for any third party clients or interest groups."

Around the time Craig bought his first DSLR, he also enrolled in a Photoshop course. "The multi-day program included photographing the local area combined with classroom computer activities. As someone who predominantly enjoys landscape photography, this particular workshop seemed tailored for me and, even better, what quickly became apparent was the added benefit of participating with 'like-minded' people. Not only were the facilitators instructing, but other participants were sharing their ideas and the images they captured."



"I quickly identified that workshops offer a great way to meet like-minded people as well as experience new geographical locations."

Craig suggests he might not have been to some of the places he's visited, were he not travelling within the camaraderie of a small group. "Workshops and photo tours can take you to local areas that are easily visited, as well as overseas destinations where access, language and other potential impediments

Camp Mansfield

Two old miners' huts remain near the beach in Svalbard. Approaching the shore by Zodiac, the atmospherics that day delivered a certain mood. In my processing of the image, I have kept the scene relatively dark and foreboding, just as it felt when I was there. I suggest the 16:9 ratio best suited the scene. I was fortunate to have this image deemed Gold and a winner in the landscape category.



Ghost Ship

Catching the ferry to Pyramiden in the Svalbard Archipelago on a very still, but foggy day. As we got closer to the town, the fog commenced to lift and this three-masted yacht came into view. A few shots were captured before the yacht's visibility quickly diminished. My takeaway from this was always have your camera ready plus, quickly decide on a composition and shoot.

may slow you down. For instance, I was only a few years into rediscovering photography when I met Peter Eastway on a Patagonia photo tour."

On many of the workshops Craig takes, he'll add on a few extra days so he can either return to locations and shoot more of the same, or further explore the region on his own. "Workshops have exposed me to new techniques, alternate ideas in composition and camera craft, plus new (at least for me) and different post-processing considerations. I've thoroughly enjoyed those discussions and times with fellow workshop members and facilitators. I recommend the workshop-type environment for photography.

"Having identified myself as a landscape photographer, I will often shoot whatever is in front of me and takes my interest. So there is the inclusion of wildlife, city and industrial scenes in some of my portfolio.

"As I have grown and matured in my photography, what I focus on has shifted. I still love nature and landscapes. However, instead of shooting broad, wide vistas all the time, these days I often find more intimate scenes to shoot. These images bring me greater enjoyment and purpose. Often I will seek minimalist and 'quieter landscapes' to capture within traditional landscape locations. The simpler compositions are more challenging to



Grain Elevator

This old and dilapidated grain elevator sat in a field covered with snow. I was torn with the balance of displaying the old, collapsing elevator and its poor state, versus the pristine white winter scene that surrounded it. So I took a high-key approach and decided to do away with the grungy dark look that is often sought in old infrastructure imagery. Cropping to 16:9 and for me this image was ready. I was fortunate to win both Gold and the landscape category. This image has done well both digitally and in print competitions.

get right, but in turn, this is directly coupled to the satisfaction and pleasure of achieving the desired goal. I enjoy this ongoing evolution in my photography and post-editing style."

Mechanics

Craig's current kit is based around a Nikon D850 DSLR. "I have a number of Nikon prime and zoom lenses from 14mm up to 200mm, along with a Tamron 150-600mm zoom that I use for wildlife and landscapes. I am currently considering migrating to a mirrorless solution. I say 'migrate' as I am very happy with my current system and view the pathway to mirrorless as containing both pros and cons. I don't think going to mirrorless can be categorised purely as an 'upgrade'.

"In the field, I enjoy long-exposure photography. I have a range of B+W neutral density filters, as well as a Firecrest 16-stop ND filter. Long exposure photography slows the process down and allows me time to consider a location and my composition.

"I use Lightroom Classic and Photoshop for post-production. My workflow sees me bring everything into Lightroom and utilise its catalogue system for managing my files. These days, I find Lightroom able to achieve the processing results I desire, therefore Photoshop is used less than perhaps five or more years ago. Annoyingly for me, I use a Windows desktop PC at home and an Apple MacBook when travelling. I would like to standardise this one day. With my PC, I use a BenQ 27" calibrated monitor and a Synology NAS

solution as my main file storage and this is automatically backed up to a remote site.

"I also like to keep images as they were captured in-camera. They remain authentic. By that I mean I do not add, alter or remove significant areas in an image. At most, I may clone or remove small items at the edge of the image if I deem them distracting. I am less worried about ISO noise these days and normally shoot aperture-priority. When using a tripod, I will shoot at the base ISO. Otherwise Auto ISO is selected and if necessary, I use Topaz DeNoise at the start of my post-processing."



Ice Reflections

Travelling through a labyrinth of fjords in the North East Greenland National Park, stunning landscapes are everywhere. On the morning of this image, a near perfectly still fjord offered excellent reflections. A large group of icebergs was sitting near the head of the fjord, but this iceberg sat solo in front of the fjord's mountainous walls. There was nothing further to consider but to just start shooting. This image won me a major award in the Sony World Photography competition.



"My editing style has changed over the years, probably at the same rate as I have shifted in what I capture in the field. With my earlier wide landscape scenes from 10 years ago, all adjustments were global. These days, I will selectively adjust luminosity, contrast and saturation in specific areas within an image, after which some overall global adjustments may occur prior to exporting the image file."

Printing

"Around six years ago, I commenced my printing journey. After some initial trials and using a third party printer, I purchased an Epson P906 17" printer. This purchase was coupled with viewing a slew of YouTube printing videos and many hours of physically printing. Along the way, I have enrolled and attended multiple educational sessions, both online and in physical classrooms. With the knowledge I have gained (and I suggest for any skills you wish to acquire, develop and maintain), the adage of practise, practise, practise is heard infinitum, but it is so true.

"Though stating the obvious, but less talked about, printing is time-consuming and does have a financial cost. However, the benefits I have gained from printing are many. Printing has improved my photography exponentially, which in turn has improved the quality of my printed images. How so, you ask?

"When printing, I suggest you see your work more objectively. Moving away from a backlit screen quickly exposes any faults: poor focus, over-sharpening, blown areas, through to clearly identifiable dust spots. It is surprising how forgiving a monitor/eye combination can be when viewing images. Or maybe that is just my lazy self!

"Holding a print in your hand, you develop a stronger sense of composition. You learn what looks balanced and this in turn leads to more thoughtful compositions in-camera. Printing your images is not only the last step in the photography continuum, but it's where your images can come to life.

Decaying Church

Taken on the same road trip as the hoar frost tree, this old, abandoned church sat forlornly in a paddock. The challenges for me were multiple. Photograph the church quickly, in case the weather conditions improve. Work out the best composition or compositions to determine where the tripod should be located. I spent nearly two hours photographing the church. Weather remained constant and I captured this church from many angles and with many focal lengths. For me it was a great shoot.

"These days, I start thinking about the print when looking through the viewfinder, including the media I will use: warm or cool papers, any texture, the surface finish, matte or pearl. What will work best and how do I wish others to see my art? When you get it right, the print looks far superior to the same image displayed on a screen.

"For me, all of the above creates a more intentional shoot and a better outcome in-camera. It helps me deliver the image with the mood, intent and style I intended. Printing elevates my work. Placing a print on your wall and studying it over a period of time gives you a deeper connection with your work and hopefully, with refinement, an image that better holds another's eye.

"In the last few years, I have had success in competitions where the print is judged on its merits. I cannot overstate how printing turns photography from something you see on a screen into something you craft, feel and analyse holistically. It sharpens your eye, improves your technique and deepens your artistic intent.

"If you take away nothing else from this article, I implore all photographers to print their work! Okay, I can step down from my 'printing' high horse."

Competitions

"As part of my photography growth, I commenced entering photo competitions. I did this to force me to curate and prepare my best work for third party viewing. I wanted my entries to



Winter Mountains

Flying above the Mount Cook/Aoraki National Park in winter. The clouds were moving quickly, resulting in the sunlight being heavily filtered below. The ever-shifting dappled light on the mountains was superb. I was only able to capture about 10 frames before the scene was gone forever. Fortunately, most were in focus and this is my favourite shot from the sequence. Even though dramatic, the extra sky above did not, in my evaluation, add extra value to the image, so I cropped to a 16:9 ratio.

Hoar Frost Tree

Driving in Canada mid-winter was interesting. Certainly there are different temperatures and weather than home in Australia! Then a cold snap arrived and with that heavy fog descended. This lasted for a few days and resulted in most vegetation covered in hoar frost. It was beautiful! Aside from the challenges driving in foggy and freezing conditions, I was in love with the winter wonderland that was delivered around every corner. So many shots taken and 'remember not to blow your highlights' was my mantra. With this particular single tree shot, I added a stoke border and suggest it and the fine art textured paper I have printed it on delivers a near perfect elegant print.

be assessed and judged by knowledgeable judges. I wanted to grow and was seeking external, independent and hopefully impartial feedback on my imagery.

"The first years of entering competitions were barren. Absolutely zero results, no awards, commendations or comments. What were the judges thinking?

"But over time, I tailored which competitions I entered, normally seeking ones that provided informative feedback or at the very least, a meaningful score. Now, I enter competitions whose previous winning images are ones that align with my style of photography – images I would have been proud to have claimed as mine. In recent years I have been fortunate to receive many awards, winning some competitions and receiving





positive commentary from the judges. This in turn forces me to go again and hopefully do even better in future competitions.

"In reality, I am competing against myself to do better. I have learnt that in the majority of photography competitions, that to be listed as a finalist means your work is of quality. Your image(s) are of a high standard. Then to receive an award or place is a bit of luck on the day.

"As an aside, doing well in many competitions brought the new found issue of being contacted by people requesting to view my work and on rare occasions, seeking to purchase one

Verdant

Hiking in the Pacific Northwest of the USA is highly recommended. Hiking mid-winter in appalling weather is not easy, but at least the crowds are virtually non-existent. On this morning my gear and I were well and truly soaked. Towering Redwoods, Douglas-fir and Spruce trees are in abundance and often clustered together. Like shooting in the sand dunes, sometimes forest compositions do not come easy. My approach is to keep moving until something interesting comes along. Often it may only require a slight deviation off-trail, maybe a different focal length, but after expending many, many hours in forests, compositions do reveal themselves – eventually. Maybe it is just me, a slow learner. That morning I took around 1,000 images and I think this single shot image is my favourite. The wet foliage, foggy conditions and subdued, filtered daylight did the heavy lifting for this scene.



Sunset in the Dunes

Wandering endlessly around sand dunes in search of good and preferably great compositions is not as bad as it sounds. It's a little less enjoyable in 36°C heat and especially so in soft, shifting sand, carrying kilograms of camera kit and kilograms of water. But as the sun gets lower in the day, the shadows emerge and grow. You have limited time before darkness descends. Scenes keep appearing in front of you. Sunrise and sunset are my favourite times to shoot sand dunes and in recent years, long focal lengths are my go-to choice. This particular scene was taken in Death Valley, California.

of my images. I was not prepared for this and embarked upon gaining a web presence outside of social media. I am now operating what I call the third iteration of my website to display a small sample of my images.

"To be contacted by someone who ultimately buys a print is humbling and extremely satisfying. Doubling back to printing, I initially sent my files to professional printing services, but discovered that it was a lottery! Many of these prints did not deliver the outcome I was seeking. However, generally it was not the print company or their machines, it was my poor file preparation, media selection and in some instances, poor camera craft/post-processing that were leading to what I describe as unprofessional print outcomes. My images looked as I wanted on my monitor, but they printed poorly. This led me in part to commence the print journey I spoke of above."

The photographs accompanying this article are a chronological journey through Craig's digital camera era. It includes some of his earlier images as well as some that have been awarded major prizes in international photography competitions.

You can see more of Craig's work on his website: <https://www.craigmcgowanphotography.com/> as well as on his social media: <https://www.instagram.com/cmac6248/>

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Maximum Group Size: 12



Immerse yourself in the beauty, spirit and stories of the Snowy Mountains High Country on this unique 5-day all-inclusive photography experience.

Designed for photographers of all skill levels, this tour offers the chance to capture the very best of the Australian high country — from sweeping alpine landscapes and changing weather to iconic wildlife, brumbies, river crossings and the people who call this remarkable region home.

Joining the experience as guest photographic



mentors are Tim and Robin Moon of Wanderlust Imagery, sharing their knowledge, inspiration and guidance throughout the tour.

This is more than a photography workshop — it is an opportunity to experience authentic Australiana. Spend time with the brumbies, learn about their history and training, seek out local wildlife, and photograph the mood and drama of the high country in all its forms. Depending on the weather and conditions, opportunities may include astro photography, fog-draped plains, autumn trees or early snow. Along the way, enjoy the warm hospitality of the region, with time to savour local food, produce and country-style hospitality that make the Snowy Mountains High Country so memorable.

With inspiring locations, expert support and a thoughtfully curated itinerary, the High Country Australian Experience has been designed to inspire both your creativity and your sense of connection to the land.

All proceeds from the tour go to the Snowy Brumby Horsemanship Charity.



For Further Information

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Website: www.snowybrumbyhorsemanship.com <https://highcountryexperience.eventbrite.com.au>

* Conditions apply.

AFTER THE ROAD

PHOTOGRAPHER: STUART WESTMORE

Stuart Westmore created a 'zine project based on his journeys around America.

The photos, reminiscent of Stephen Shore and Grant Mudford, show us how such a simple

'zine could be so effective. And so accessible for every reader to make themselves.

We asked Stuart for a little background on his project, "After The Road".



Lewistown MT, July 2023. Leica M10

Insight

I enjoy many types of photography these days, but it all started with landscapes. A poster of Peter Dombrovski's "Morning Mist, Rock Island Bend" hung on my wall in a share house in the 1980s. The photo was the centrepiece of the "No Dams" campaign. It was everywhere – a picture that helped change a government and altered the way my generation thinks about protecting our environment. I guess it also changed my life – planted the idea that a photograph can change the world.

My love of sport and music photography comes from a similar place – trying to convey how it feels to be there when the action is on and things are going crazy. It's not unlike when the good light is happening in a landscape – it's still about knowing where to stand and when to push the button, but you just need to make up your mind a bit quicker.

I live and work in Melbourne, Australia. I worked in an intense corporate environment that can become all-consuming and photography was my hobby for a long time. The great thing about photography is that it's hard to be thinking about work when you have your eye to the viewfinder and you're concentrating on composition and exposure. So photography was my reward, an escape and a good excuse to travel. In particular, the unexpected beauty in urban and industrial landscapes is something that calls to me. I love the inherent themes of decay and renewal.



Buffalo MT, July 2023. *Leica M10*

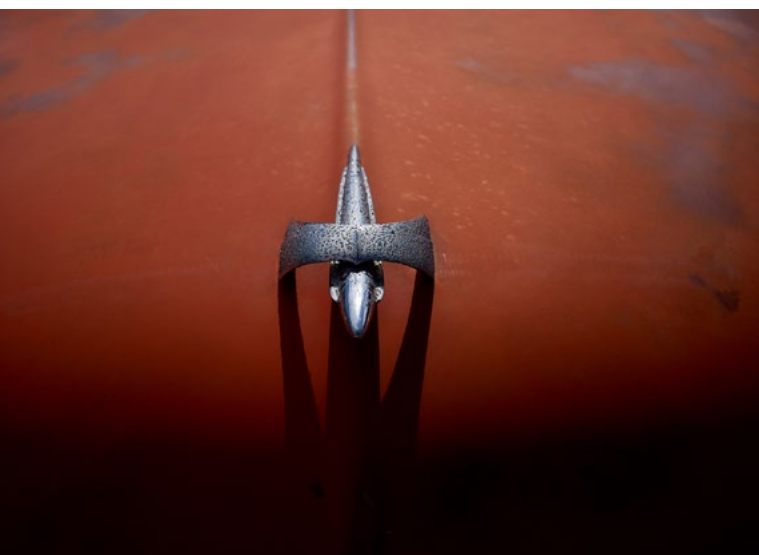


Major Saskatchewan, January 2025. Leica SL3.

The Idea

This project began as a series of human-altered landscape photographs. For a decade or more, I've made a collection of photographs of worn out, rusty things.

All this I started opportunistically. I'd notice a subject on my daily commute and return later with a camera. It's evolved to trips specifically hunting for this kind of subject matter, alone or with friends. In 2025, Christian Fletcher and I drove across Australia from Dunsborough to Melbourne looking for banal subjects. At the Head of the Bight, other travellers were taking snapshots of the cliffs and the long straight road. Meanwhile, we found ourselves in the only junkyard for hundreds of kilometres.



Goodland KS, July 2023. Leica M10

It can lead you to some odd places. Ghost towns on the Great Plains where American families have walked away from failed farms. Just left everything behind. Yards full of rusting Fords and Oldsmobiles. A gutted school bus beside a grain silo. You need to watch yourself in those places – even if it looks 100% deserted, you don't want to ignore a No Trespass sign. There's no shot that's worth getting shot for.

The main downside of road trip photography is you have almost no control over lighting conditions. You can't always wait around for things to improve. You do the best with the conditions you have.

Many of these photos were made hand-held with a Leica M10, which is an easy way to work, especially when you're in and out of the car all day. That said, I think the strongest images were made with a digital medium format camera. It can be a grind to set it up 10 or 20 times a day, especially in snow or when you're picking your way through long grass that's almost certainly crawling with snakes. But the files are just way superior. There's also something about putting in the effort of setting up a tripod that makes you think harder about composition. Even in -37°C on the side of the road in a one-horse Saskatchewan town. Or maybe especially in those places. It's a lot of effort to get there, so you want to get it right.

The Output

All these pictures have been accumulating in a folder on my hard drive. It's had various names over the years. For a long time it was called New Topographics, which gives you an idea of the kind of work it encompassed – urban and industrial locations, rural decay, endurance. As stronger photos get added to the collection, others get pushed out, but until recently, I hadn't worked out how



Alvena Saskatchewan, January 2025. *Leica SL3*



Ogallala NE, July 2023. Leica M10.



Flaxville MT, July 2023. Leica M10



Chamberlain Saskatchewan, January 2025. *Leica SL3*



Terowie SA, April 2025. *Leica SL3*

to share it. I confess that I'm one of those "it's not a photograph until it's printed" people. So I began creating sets that seemed to belong together with the idea of making a set of mini collections. This is the first, but I can see more emerging.

"After the Road" was created initially as a 'zine project. The thread through the photographs is the fate of cars and other vehicles when we are done with them. Often it's a scrap heap, but not always. It turns out there are plenty of vehicles that humans can't manage to get rid of. Maybe the reasons are sentimental, maybe they're economic (scrap metal or vintage car value), or maybe they're practical. How do you dispose of a tonne and a half of Chevrolet in the middle of a cornfield in North Dakota? Evidently, there's a point when you stop trying. One of the great things about old cars is they don't shed their character – even as they lose their gloss, their charm is burnished.

This might remain as a 'zine, or maybe it evolves into an exhibition. We shall see!

You can see more of Stuart's work at:

www.skwestmore.com

@skwestmore (instagram)



Ryder ND, July 2023. *Phase One IQ4*



Peter Eastway's

PHOTO PROCESS

CREATIVE & TECHNICAL ATELIER

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.

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!**

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. It 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.

For full details, visit the Better Photography Education website and follow the menu to Photo Process

www.betterphotographyeducation.com



WIND:



ETERNAL MOVEMENT



Most photographers benefit from having a project because it gives our photography purpose. A project can be as simple (and important) as recording our family throughout the year, or it can be a much more detailed process involving travel, collaboration and a huge splash of imagination.

Raoul Iacometti has created a wonderful example of the latter: *Wind – Eternal Movement*. This is the story behind his stunning portfolio of environmental dance photographs.

The Origin

Explains Raoul, “At the end of the 1980s, after a crossing from Lanzarote, I set foot on Fuerteventura for the first time.” Fuerteventura is the second largest of the Canary Islands, sitting in the Atlantic Ocean approximately 100 kilometres off the north west coast of Africa.

“The wind overwhelmed me: the warmth of Africa, the freshness of the ocean, ever-present. Every breath tasted of salt and volcanic earth. The island entered me without asking permission. Unconditionally. And since then, it has never left me, bridging even the greatest distances.”

It was over 30 years later that he met Rebecca Erroi – a professional dancer and performer. “She was a nomadic spirit and I spoke to her about the wind, the ocean and that island, born from the power of volcanoes. In 2021, right there, we imagined a project. The following year, we set off with a notebook full of ideas and two suitcases filled with black and white fabrics. A dialogue between body, wind, ocean and lava. It all began there, in a place that does not simply welcome: it captivates.”

The Wind

Continues Raoul, “The wind is movement. It rises without warning, vaults skyward, then plunges, swift and tireless, hundreds of times a day, without reason, without cause. It softens, only to spring again into leaps of air, inflating its cheeks, blowing harder, demanding space. When it chooses to carry away what stands in its path, nothing can resist. It feeds the ocean, lifts the waves and hurls them, frothing, against the cliffs, each strike a muted crash, a roar that rends the silence. It has polished those rocks for millennia, never pausing, never yielding.

“A little further on, it embraces the desert, reshaping dunes in an instant, crossing plains of ancient lava, brushing the silent summits of volcanoes as if greeting old friends asleep. Then it flees, secretive, elusive, as one with something to hide.”

FV-30 road, between Barranco del Valle and Valle la Marichala, May 2022



Road to Playa de Cofete, May 2022



Playa Alzada Cove (Ajuy), May 2022



Ermita Protestante de Violante (Barranco de Violante), Maggio 2022

"Sometimes, deep at night, it softens, a gentle, cool whisper, but at dawn it returns, brimming with power and impatience, disturbing all in its path in a ceaseless dance of primeval rhythms.

"It teases, devours, slips in, penetrates the deepest cracks of sheer cliffs. It soars over forbidden lands, drifts, strikes, repels, howls, hisses, caresses, brushes, whistles, changes, rages. And then, just as suddenly, it vanishes. Yet nothing, after its passing, remains the same."

As you can read, Raoul was quite infatuated with the local weather conditions. "The wind is bound to its own destiny: it cannot stop, for it is a living soul. Since the world began, it has accompanied the breath of all things, giving them motion, giving them life. And it will continue to do so—forever."

And so the wind was the canvas on which to build his project. How would it work?

The Artists

Raoul Iacometti has been working as a freelance photographer for over 25 years, balancing his personal artistic research with commercial assignments across a wide range of sectors, including documentary and social reportage, industrial and interior photography, events, dance and portraiture. His images have been published in magazines, newspapers and books

and are included in the Historical Photographic Archive of the 3M Foundation, the Italian Photographic Archive and several prestigious private collections.

Today, Raoul also teaches basic and advanced photography courses and conducts workshops across Italy and abroad, offering group sessions and one-to-one instruction. His teaching covers a wide array of subjects, including portraiture, dance, street photography and, since 2012, the creative use of smartphones in photography.

Rebecca Erroi is an Italian freelance dancer whose career spans both classical and contemporary performance. She trained at Dancehaus Susanna Beltrami in Milan and at the Alonzo King LINES Ballet in San Francisco. She holds a degree in Music and Performing Arts from the universities of Milan and Rome and is a member of the artistic collective FreeFloatingBodies, which combines the art of movement with visual arts.

Throughout her career, Rebecca has performed with internationally renowned artists. She danced for Christina Aguilera and Katy Perry during Dolce & Gabbana Haute Couture fashion shows, with Roberto Bolle on the RAI television program "Danza con me" and with Claudio Baglioni on his nationwide tour Atuttocuore.

In the realm of musical theatre, she was part of the cast of Aida for the centenary of the Macerata Opera Festival in 2021,



Elevazione Series. Zona Norte de las Dunas de Corralejo (Parque Natural Dunas de Corralejo), Maggio 2022

toured with La Divina Commedia Opera Musical during the 2020–2022 seasons and performed in Van Gogh Café Opera Musical for the 2023–2025 seasons. Since 2022, she has been collaborating with director and choreographer Giuliano Peparini in both Italian and international productions.

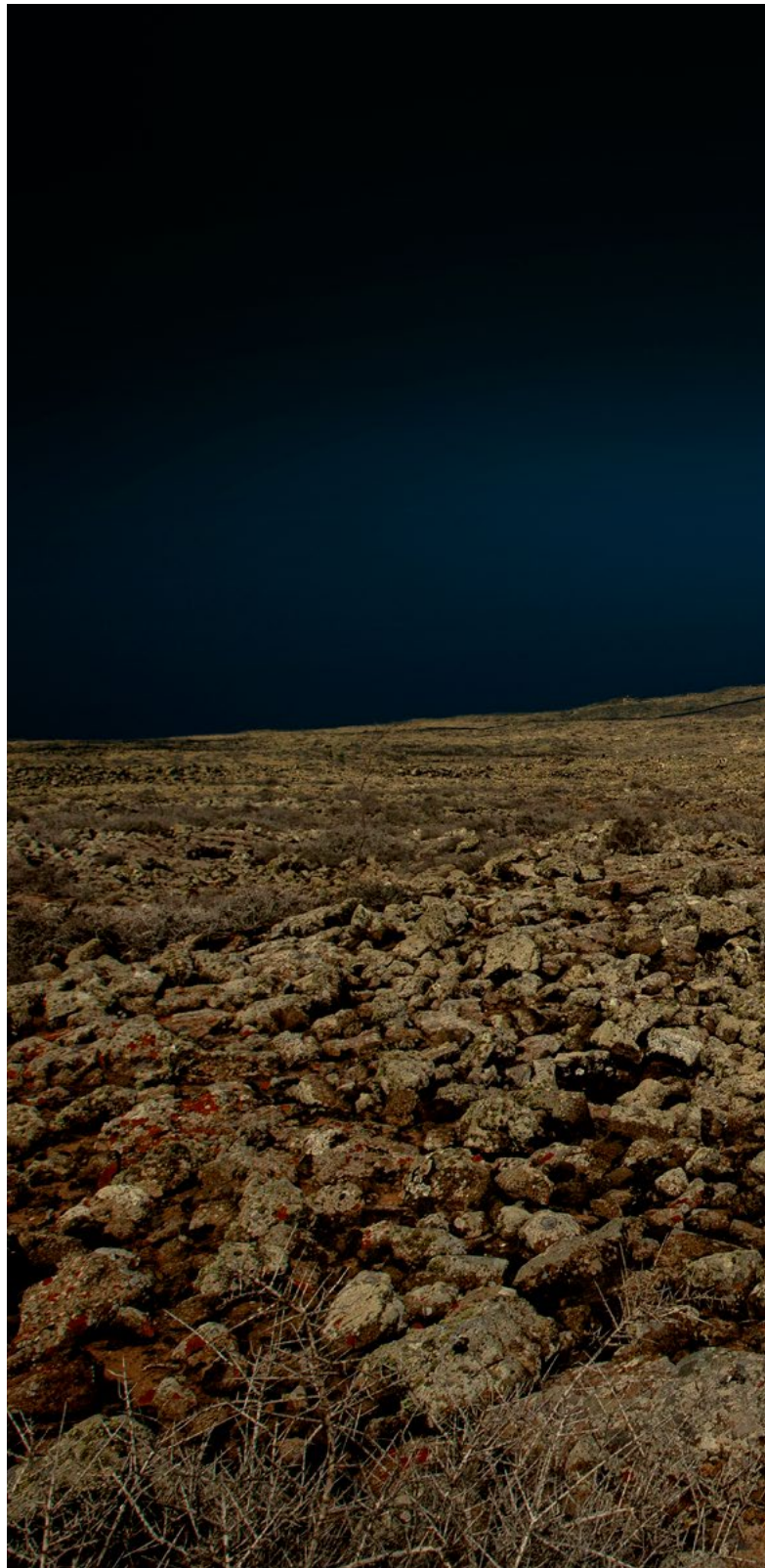
Perhaps one takeaway for this project is that it's based on a genuine passion for something – a place with particular weather conditions – and followed through with existing life experiences. So it's unlikely readers will create a portfolio of images like Raoul's, but hopefully the project will be inspirational in developing their own projects. So, how did Raoul go about it?

Practical Issues

For the shoots Raoul used Canon cameras: two EOS Mark III bodies with 24–70mm f2.8, 16–35mm f2.8 and 70–200mm f2.8 lenses. "In addition, since I've been using it professionally since 2008, in certain situations I also used an iPhone (which was also for the video footage).

"I have always used Apple systems. I currently work with a Mac Studio M2 Max and a Studio Display monitor. For software, I use Adobe Lightroom and Adobe Photoshop, while for video I use iMovie. It's a simple set-up and I have to say that when used properly, it can deliver excellent results.

"For colour images, I use post-production very lightly. I almost always shoot with slight underexposure (around one stop). With black and white, however, I'm a bit obsessive. Having printed in the darkroom for about 20 years, I now work in the digital 'lightroom' (using Lightroom and Photoshop) in such a way that the prints achieve the three-dimensionality needed to make them 'come alive'. I am not nostalgic for the past, I simply don't like flat images made up of a grey tonal range that makes them dull and anonymous."



Blue Series. FV-10 road, Volcàn de la Arena, May 2022



"My black-and-white images are already mentally conceived as monochrome. I care deeply about this concept: black and white or colour is never a decision made afterwards (this also comes from my film background). The underexposure I apply while shooting helps me obtain denser images later, when I approach post-production and convert them into black and white.

"A separate discussion applies to the Blue series (which consists of five photographs in different locations). In this

case, post-production involved the intentional insertion of the moon and a blue fabric sheet. The inspiration came at the very moment of shooting: the solidified lava landscape, the colours of other elements within the scene and the intensely polarised sky created a vision that I felt compelled to bring to life. Blue is also my favourite colour!

"The photographs from the Elevazione series (which consists of six different jumps) were all taken in the same location. Rebecca was wrapped in a square piece of heavy stretch fabric



Caretera la Peatonal Piragua (Área de Acampada), May 2022



Parque Natural de las Dunas de Corralejo, May 2022



Caretera la Peatonal Piragua (Área de Acampada), May 2022

measuring three metres on each side. What makes these images special is that there are no variations for these six jumps: every leap was captured with a single shot — as I always work — without the use of burst mode or multiple exposures.

“Producing these images was not always easy. The sudden changes in light, the sheets once released into the wind taking unpredictable directions and their large dimensions, made them difficult to control. Sometimes we even asked people nearby, who were curiously watching us, to help hold and release them at the right moment for the shot, throwing them into the wind and letting nature do the rest.

“It was only Rebecca and me, my cameras and occasionally a reflector panel (Lastolite). We moved according to the weather conditions. Knowing the island extremely well, we managed to reach the locations we had chosen when the light was right. Seven uninterrupted days travelling from north to south, east to west, driven by passion, consistency and mutual empathy.

“The choice between colour and black and white — and I want to stress again that this choice always happens during the shooting phase, even though I always shoot in colour and convert later — was based on the place, the light, but above all on our emotional state and what we were feeling most intensely in that moment.

“This work begins from a conceptual idea; aesthetics come

afterwards, but the foundation is conceptual. The dialogue between the body, shapes, light and the elements — wind, ocean and earth — is the core of the project.

“While I particularly love the black and white photos, there are also colour photographs that convey an entirely different concept. Black and white subtracts, colour adds.”

Raoul explains that this work was exhibited in two important exhibitions. The first was at the Festival della Fotografia Italiana (June 2025), featuring a series of 12 large-format images displayed outdoors in the town of Bibbiena, Tuscany. The second was in an exhibition space in the city of Monza (November 2025), presenting a series of 20 images in different sizes, printed directly with UV technology on plexiglass.

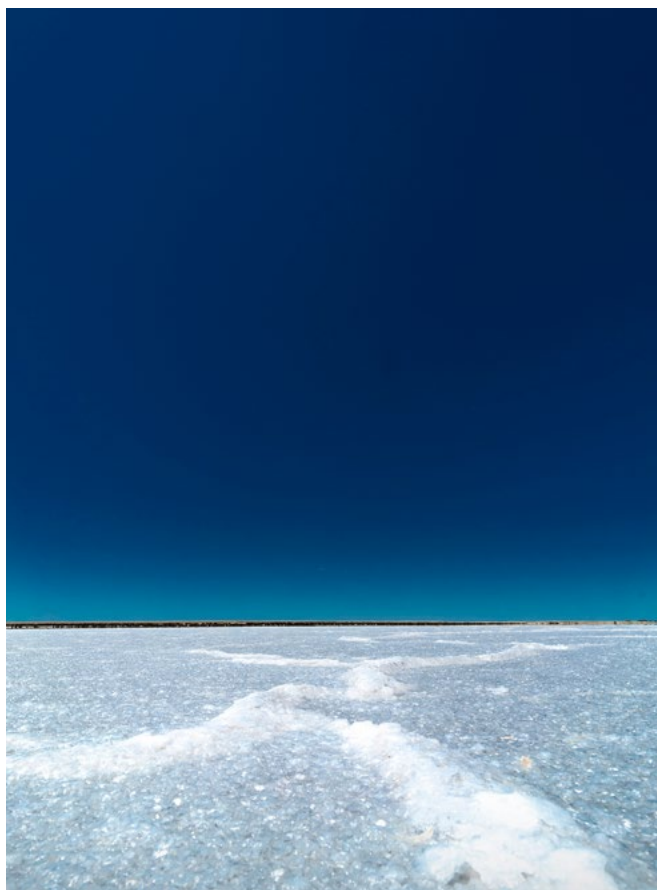
“This latter exhibition had a very strong visual impact thanks to my friend and master printer Roberto Berné (Studio Berné – <https://www.studioberne.com>), who produces prints and exhibition installations for renowned names such as Steve McCurry, Elliott Erwitt, Letizia Battaglia and Luigi & Iango, among many others.”

You can see more of the exhibition at <https://new.express.adobe.com/webpage/7Dqm4gVojJzR6>.

THE PROFESSIONAL AND THE TRIPOD

Ron Langman challenges us about the use of a tripod. Are we being lazy?

Are we being too particular? What do you think?



Many of you may have noticed on social media the profusion of resurrected photographs from the 1800s. Some have been colourised, some digitally 'restored' with astonishing detail that comes from glass plates as large as an A4 sheet of paper. It is a new kind of 'data mining' where the resources of libraries and private collections are being trawled and displayed for wider audiences.

Whilst these images may cover a wide spectrum of subjects, from townscapes through to formal portrait and farming families, they mostly share a quality of deliberateness, a sense of the result of an intention rather than an encounter.

One thing that all the photographs share is that every one of them was taken with the camera on a tripod.

This constraint was imposed on the photographer because he or she was faced with exposure times that numbered in seconds, not parts of a second. Emulsion sensitivity was equivalent to an ISO rating far below what today's cameras offer.

Yet the cameras were cumbersome and you literally had to walk from the back to the front to change an aperture or 'cock' the shutter. Even in the 1800s you might have had a 'rising front', a facility to raise or lift the lens upwards (instead of tilting the whole camera), allowing you to see the tops of buildings

Opposite: Alexandrina Dawn

Left: Summersalt

Try hanging your camera under your tripod. Don't be afraid to place the horizon somewhere new.





Moonlight Sonata

Light painted with a small torch. Tripod essential!



Middleton sunrise

Two exposure settings combined

whilst keeping the camera level and the walls parallel.

The shutter needed to be released without touching the camera and this was sometimes done pneumatically by pressing a rubber 'bulb'. (This is where the 'B' on your camera's shutter settings comes from.)

You might be thinking, "Thank goodness those days are gone and we now have portability, wide apertures and high sensitivity. We no longer need tripods."

But I contend that, at least in the case of landscape photography, the tripod plays a role more important than just holding the camera still. It instils a mindset that separates the artist and craftsman from a casual snaphooter. There is something about the discipline of assembling your tools before you undertake a task, something that says, "I am here to do a job."

The professional landscape photographer does not set out to take a dozen images with a view to choosing a winner later. He or she studies the possible viewpoints, looking for the one optimal location for the camera, the one opportunity to create a winning composition. The little extra effort and even inconvenience of a tripod play a role in making the most important decision, before addressing all the minutiae that might follow.

This is where the tripod is placed and now the brain is free to ponder the many other considerations.

Do I want to set my camera at something other than eye level? Do I want to suspend it under the tripod at grass level, or go for the maximum height extension?



Above: Wudinna Salt Lake

Try this after sunset at f22 and ISO 50. You will be glad you took your tripod.

Right: Homage to Ansel

This red rock face is only three metres high. The camera was kept level and the bottom half cropped out to give an 'architectural' treatment. After conversion to black and white, the blues were darkened, the reds were lightened and the black point shifted to ensure some maximum blacks.

Do I want a long shutter speed and a neutral density filter to let clouds track across the sky?

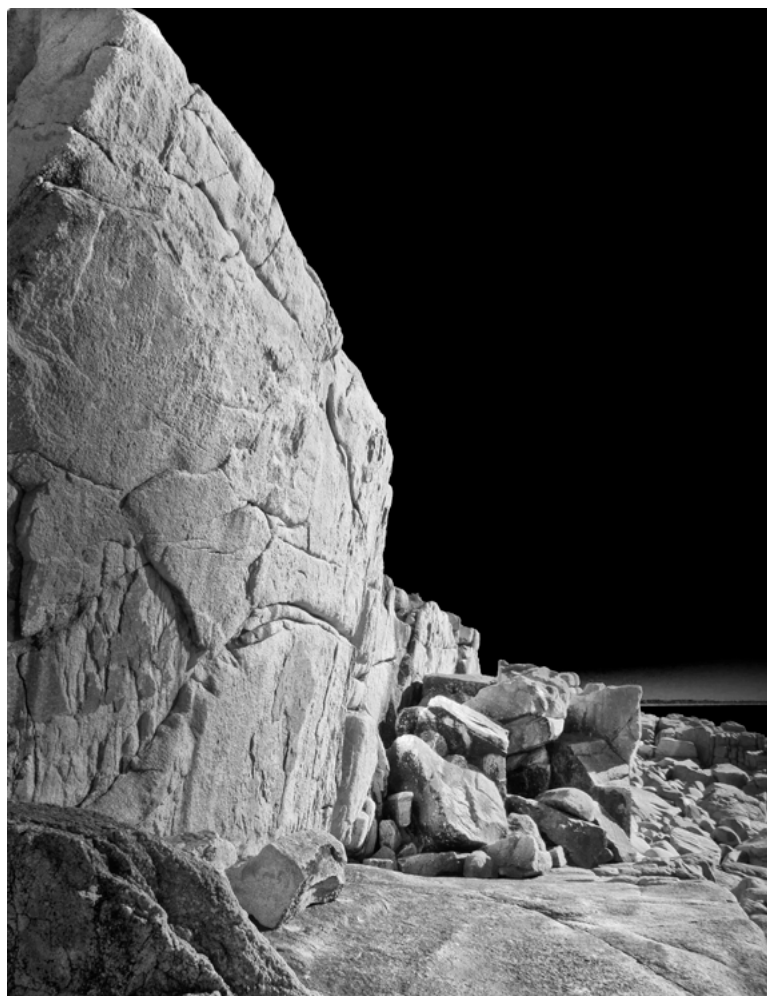
Do I want to let moving water become a misty shimmer or have the breeze brush an ethereal mood on foliage? How far can I bring the focus back from the horizon to favour the foreground sharpness? Do I need to stack different focus settings for stacking later?

What happens if I use an ultra-wide angle lens and a 'portrait' format? This will let me feature close-up details at my feet and include the horizon at the same time. (If you want to do a lot of this technique, think about getting a 'tilt' lens to maximise depth-of-field more easily.)

Do I want exposure bracketing of exactly the same image (because the camera is locked off on the tripod)? Am I shooting monochrome and want to darken a blue sky with a filter?

All of these things can be given your attention because the most important decision has been made and the tripod has been set.

The professionals pack up and leave the job in the knowledge that they have done the best they could have done in the circumstances. They are not planning to pick a winner from a number of less than ideal images on a screen later.



2026 BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

By Peter Eastway

I looked at what I wrote last year and can only note that the standard of photography continues to improve. Last year, judges and Grand Masters of Photography David Oliver, Tony Hewitt and I agreed that the standard of our 'amateur' competition was every bit as good as the professional competitions out there. Our entrants have skills and imagination that dissolve the distinction between pro and amateur.

When entering our competition, there are two processes at work. The first is the 'standard' of the entry – Bronze, Silver or Gold. There's no limit to the number of these awards that can be given – if your entry reaches their standard, that's the score you get.

We handed out a lot of Silver awards this year. In some competitions, this might indicate the standard of judging was not very hard, but over the years, we have learnt to recognise what (we think) a good photograph is, so if an entry reaches that standard, it deserves the award. Congratulations to all award winners, but especially to Silver and, of course, the Golds!

The second part of the judging process is a comparative one. When we hand out the five major prizes, the judges are comparing the top scoring entries against each other. Which landscape photograph is 'the best'? Which portfolio of four entries should win the Photographer of the Year? To get to this stage, you have to have a top scoring entry, but this gives the judges a second chance to ensure they are in agreement (not that we're always in agreement)! It's important for all entrants to realise that this second process is a matter of personal opinion and bias, no matter how experienced the judges are and no matter how objective we try to be. And that's why we suggest entrants aim to earn Silvers for all their entries, as this is a truer reflection of your skill than winning a category or the overall prize!

Congratulations to our 2026 Better Photography Magazine Photographer of the Year winner Cerrina Smith, USA and to our category winners:

Classic Landscape:

Jo Andrews, Australia (High on a Hill)

Emotive Portraiture:

Brian Russell, Australia (ANZAC on the Beach)

Revealing Nature:

Efraïm Baaijens, Netherlands (Unveiled Vulnerability)

Open (Your Choice):

Hardijanto Budiman, Indonesia (Tequila Sunset)

Each category winner takes home AUS \$750 and the Photographer of the Year \$2000!

WINNER Cerrina Smith

Cerrina Smith is based in Cheyenne, Wyoming. "I am an enthusiast photographer with a profound need to create art. My work is an eclectic mix centred on visual storytelling, simplicity and emotional impact. I strive to find everyday beauty in the world around us, driven by a passion for capturing the true spirit of the American west.

"The cowboy photos are part of a personal project where I photograph strangers that embody the rugged independence of America and the spirit of the West. The Cowboy's Gaze was taken at a rodeo in Cheyenne. I love the quiet confidence in his expression, but underneath, there is also a glimpse of vulnerability. Asking to take a stranger's portrait can be awkward and requires a combination of confidence, courage and friendly energy. I try to approach people with genuine curiosity and openness. I seem to have an innate ability to connect with strangers, creating a shared, collaborative experience.

"Cowboy Camaraderie was taken in the small town of Douglas, Wyoming. I captured a photo of two men wearing cowboy hats sharing a moment of friendship. They sat across from one another at a booth with red vinyl seats in the historic College Inn Bar, the oldest continuously operating business in the city. The scene felt authentic, warm and very western. It felt like they went "way back." It was a charming snapshot of local life.

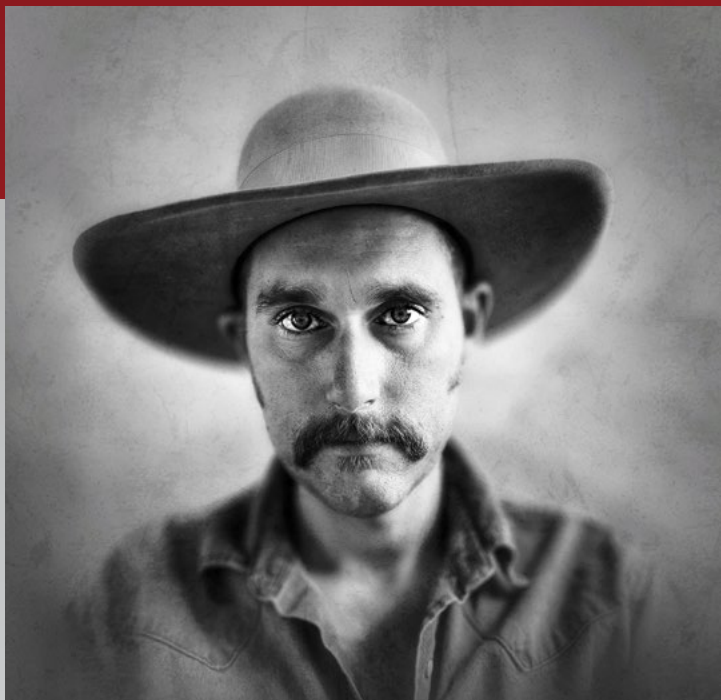
"Sentinel of the Clouds is a photo I took in the Medicine Bow National Forest in Vedauwoo, which is located in southeastern Wyoming. There was a storm approaching and I captured my Australian Cattle Dog mix standing atop a rock formation. She looked like a true guardian surveying the landscape.

"Grand Opening is a still-life of the Platycodon Grandiflorus plant, commonly known as balloon flower. I adore flowers and love to extend their beauty through a photo. I often find flowers from my own garden to photograph."

The cowboy photos were taken on a Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra Camera phone, while the dog was taken with a Sony Alpha a6100 and the flower on a Samsung Galaxy S22.

"My photographic style relies on the thoughtful and mindful use of light rather than complex camera set-ups and heavy gear. And I humbly acknowledge there is always more to learn about my medium and I will always enthusiastically continue to chase the light!

"I use the mobile editing app Snapseed for local adjustments and careful dodging and burning and I may add a little texture (as in Cowboy's Gaze). I do basic exposure balancing and local contrast adjustments, vignette, blurring edges, but my priority is always to preserve the raw integrity of the original photograph."



The Cowboy's Gaze



Cowboy Camaraderie



Grand Opening



Sentinel of the Clouds

CLASSIC LANDSCAPE WINNER

Jo Andrews, Australia

‘High on a Hill’



Jo Andrews says she is very much a hobbyist photographer who enjoys landscape photography. “I started largely shooting seascapes, but now also have an interest in a variety of genres including travel, astro and aerials.

“The image is of St Thomas Church (Sveti Tomaž), one of many beautiful hilltop churches in Slovenia. We arrived for sunrise hoping for some mist, but it was not to be, so I had to make the most of what the weather delivered. I really liked that the background looks more like a texture than a forest of trees and the symmetry of the two groups of trees at each edge of the frame. This is probably my favourite image from Slovenia.”

The photo is a single image taken with a Sony A7R V body mounted with a Tamron 50-400mm lens on a Ulanzi Tree Root tripod, no filters. Settings were 342mm, 0.5 second, f11, ISO100.

“The image out of camera was a standard 3:2 frame, but I found the foreground a bit busy (there were some other buildings, paths and trees which distracted from the main subject), so I cropped it to a pano to simplify it.”



David Marriott, Australia. Untitled



Partha Roy, Singapore. The Milky Way Above the Mt Bromo



Alison Riley, Australia. Frozen Tapestry



Partha Roy, Singapore. Veins of Fire

REVEALING NATURE

Efraïm Baaijens, Netherlands
'Unveiled Vulnerability'



Efraïm Baaijens is a 19-year-old photographer from the Netherlands, specialising in macro and fine art photography. "My passion is revealing the hidden beauty of the tiny world around us, especially insects. Through my work, I aim to show details that often go unnoticed and inspire people to see nature from a different perspective. I primarily work with Hasselblad and OM System cameras, choosing the equipment that best suits each subject and creative vision."

Unveiled Vulnerability was photographed outdoors in the Netherlands. The image captures a rare and intimate moment that reveals the fragile side of a damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*). I wanted to emphasise how delicate and vulnerable nature can be when viewed up close. By magnifying details that are normally invisible to the naked eye, I hope the photograph encourages viewers to slow down and appreciate the beauty and complexity of even the smallest forms of life."

Efraïm used an Olympus OM-1 with a M.Zuiko Digital ED 60mm f2.8 Macro lens and extension tubes for additional magnification plus a Raynox DCR-250 close-up lens on the front. Illumination was from a Godox V860III flash with a modified AK Diffuser.

"The image was created using a macro photography workflow with focus stacking to maximise sharpness. The individual frames were merged into a single image, followed by subtle adjustments in Adobe Lightroom, including exposure, contrast, colour balance and minor retouching to preserve a natural look while highlighting the finest details."



Jeremy Janus, United States. Breakthrough



Lisa Leach, Australia. Lonely in a Crowd



Cerrina Smith, United States. Grand Opening



Jenelle Gavin, Australia. Silver Princess

EMOTIVE PORTRAIT

Brian Russell, Australia

'ANZAC on the Beach'



"My primary interest is natural history, particularly birds, but I also enjoy photographing organisms with fur or an exoskeleton. After joining the Australian Photographic Society (APS) in 1982, I became involved in and enjoyed other genres of photography, including people and sports action. Over the years, I intermittently pursued Australian photographic honours within APS salons and internationally through salons receiving the Federation Internationale de L'Art Photographique (FIAP) patronage.

"My image was created at a Photographic Society of Queensland conference where a shoot was organised with the 5th Light Horse Regiment Hervey Bay Troop. This group preserves the history, the emotion and stories associated with the regiment. During a quiet period after some displays where horses were running through the shallows of Dundowran Beach, a rider and his horse were having portraits taken by photographers to my left. I noticed a lone flag bearer in the background. As the horse rider turned away from me towards the portrait photographers, the lone flag bearer lowered his head and a story about remembrance was born in my mind. Being privileged to have my grandfather serve in France during World War I and my father serve in New Guinea during World War II, the story in my mind had significant meaning.

"For this image, I used a Canon R5 Mark II and a Sigma 40mm f/1.4 lens.

"Primarily being a nature photographer, the rules governing post-production in FIAP-patronised salons are particularly strict. Consequently, my post-processing abilities have historically been limited to basic Lightroom edits with a few masks used for dodging and burning. That is the extent of my post-processing in this image."



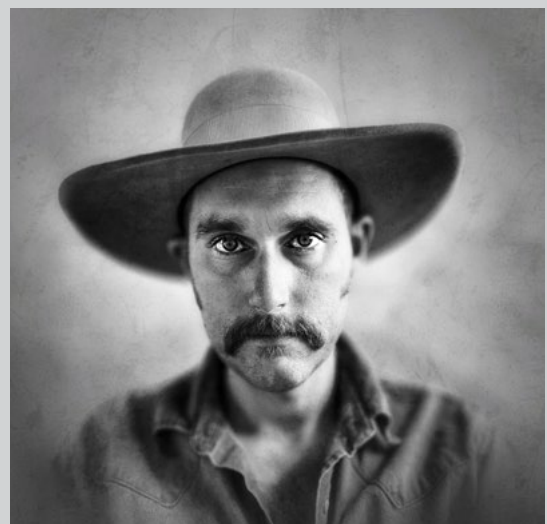
Sanghamitra Sarkar, India. Child of the Burning Earth



Fiona Lambell, Australia. Head in the Clouds



Alison Riley, Australia. Invisible Mother



Cerrina Smith, United States. The Cowboy's Gaze

OPEN CATEGORY

Hardijanto Budiman, Indonesia

‘Tequila Sunset’



“There is something magical about watching the city slow down as the sun begins to set. This photograph was captured on the rooftop of a building in Jakarta, where the skyline became the perfect stage for a moment inspired by the graceful movement of a ballerina. My aim was to blend the art of dance with the beauty of nature. As the sky transformed into a breathtaking tequila sunset, warm golden light melted into soft shades of orange, pink and purple, creating a dreamlike atmosphere that felt almost unreal.

“I’m a self-taught photographer since early 2000. My life is overflowing with creating works of art. Since a boy I have really loved drawing and painting. Art gives me freedom to create anything I want, either in fantasy or reality! I also love anything about Surrealism! Lots of my work is strongly influenced by Surrealism and for me, photography is the best medium to express my passion for art.”

Hardijanto uses a Nikon Z5 and Nikon Z7 with a 24-70mm. “I only use Photoshop for post-production of my photographs.”



Partha Roy, Singapore. Rooster Fight



Hardijanto Budiman, Indonesia. Live and Die In Planet Plastic



Dianne English, Australia. Daisy Dance



Alison Riley, Australia. Hands of Tradition

THE HIGH COUNTRY CONNECTION

**Taking great photographs isn't just about technique or creativity,
it's equally about purpose. Tracey Squire describes a purpose close to her heart.**

There are places that leave a mark on you long after you've gone. For me, the Snowy Mountains is one of those places. Every visit feels restorative. The crisp alpine air, the vast open spaces and the quiet rhythm of life in the high country seem to clear away the noise of everyday life. Creativity flows more freely here. As a wildlife photographer, I arrive with cameras and lenses, but I always leave with something far more valuable – a renewed sense of connection.

On my most recent journey into the Snowy Mountains, that connection became the story.

Photography has always been about storytelling and the strongest stories are often about relationships. In the high country, those relationships are everywhere: between people and land, horse and rider, wildlife and habitat and communities



Ian with his dog Jett at one of Bushie's rustic cabins



Charlie riding Sandy in the training yards at Snowy Brumby Horsemanship

shaped by generations of living in one of Australia's most rugged landscapes.

There is something undeniably Australian about the high country. The mountains, rivers and plains have inspired some of our most enduring folklore and poetry. This is the landscape that gave rise to legends and bush heroes. It is a land of extremes – droughts, floods, snow and fire – and its people reflect that resilience. Life here demands toughness, patience and respect for the environment.

Meeting the Brumbies

During my visit, I spent time with Snowy Brumby Horsemanship (SBH) and its newly established charity, whose mission is simple yet profound: saving one wild horse at a time.

Founded 14 years ago by Claire Rogerson with her son Charlie, SBH has rescued and rehabilitated more than 100 wild brumbies. Their philosophy is refreshingly different. "Wild horses



Sandy takes a moment before crossing the Snowy River



Wild brumby stallion keeping watch over his mob at Kiandra

lead,” they say. Every horse progresses on its own timeline. Some learn to trust in months; others take years. Watching Claire work with the horses is remarkable. Her calm presence seems to dissolve barriers that would otherwise remain. She explains that training is not about dominance, but about change.

“When working with a brumby, or any horse for that matter, you are looking for a change,” she says. “Your connection and training is about creating a change for the better in that horse, so it can live a domestic life in peace.”

That idea of connection revealed itself repeatedly through my lens.

One morning just on sunrise, we arrived at the Snowy River. A veil of mist hovered above the crystal clear water while towering gums framed the riverbank. Across the river, a mob of brumbies noticed our arrival. Slowly, they made their way towards us. Some paused to splash and play in the current while others watched intently from behind. The scene felt cinematic.

As the horses crossed the river and wandered towards us, I found myself constantly shifting perspectives – from sweeping wide-angle landscapes that showcased the grandeur of the environment, to intimate portraits that revealed the personalities of individual horses. My 24–70mm lens proved ideal for capturing both the story of the landscape and the subtle interactions unfolding within it.

Many Stories

The following morning brought a very different challenge. Charlie and his horse, Sandy, guided the mob through another river crossing at pace. Water exploded around pounding hooves while horses surged through the current. In these moments, technical precision matters. Fast shutter speeds are essential and maintaining focus on the lead horse can be difficult as autofocus systems often lock onto flying spray instead. Yet within the chaos lies opportunity. Slow shutter techniques can transform the



Foggy mornings at Rangeview give the perfect conditions for photographing gnarly gums



Working dog Blue stays steady, focused and ever watchful of the mob at Hilltop Eco

rushing water into artistic streaks of movement, conveying both power and energy. The crossing is fast and furious, so choosing your focus and style is important prior to the action starting.

Beyond the action, what fascinated me most was the relationship between horse and rider. During a training session in the round yard, Charlie and Sandy moved together with an effortless understanding. Whether saddling up, working through



Where trust leads, connection follows. Charlie and Sandy demonstrate the relationship at the heart of true horsemanship



A rain-drenched morning at Hilltop Eco



Brumbies crossing the Snowy River

exercises or simply standing quietly together afterwards, their partnership was unmistakable. There were moments when horse and rider seemed to move as a single entity.

Those are the moments photographers seek – not action alone, but connection.



John Shortt at his saddlery keeping age-old traditions alive

Social Issues

The brumbies themselves remain at the centre of ongoing debate. During my visit, culling operations were due to begin the following week, adding a sense of urgency to my time in the field. Determined to photograph wild horses in their natural environment, I travelled to Long Plain in search of free-roaming mobs. Before long, I spotted a herd grazing across the landscape. A striking black stallion stood apart from the others, watching my every move.

Keeping a respectful distance with a 180–600mm lens, I observed quietly.

The stallion never looked away. His role was clear: protector, guardian and sentinel. Yet as I watched the herd interact, it became apparent that leadership within the mob is more nuanced than many people realise. Brumbies live in close family groups with complex social structures. While the stallion protects, the lead mare often guides. Her decisions determine the movement and safety of the herd. She leads not through force, but through service, experience and an unwavering commitment to her family.

The herd follows because of trust.

Again, connection sat at the heart of the story. Beyond the horses, the wider Snowy Mountains and Monaro region offer endless photographic opportunities. Farmers and their loyal working dogs, fine Merino sheep stretching across rolling paddocks and landscapes that transition dramatically from alpine peaks to river valleys and windswept tablelands. All contribute to a region rich in visual storytelling.

The high-altitude environment shapes everything that lives here. Frost-resistant eucalypts cling to exposed ridgelines while, higher still, Snow Gums twist and contort into sculptural forms forged by wind, snow and ice. For photographers, these trees are irresistible subjects. In wet conditions, their bark glows with remarkable colour, transforming ordinary woodland scenes into vibrant studies of texture and light.

In the heart of the region lies Lake Jindabyne, its expansive

blue waters fed by the Snowy and Thredbo Rivers. On calm mornings the lake becomes a mirror, reflecting surrounding landscapes and sky with breathtaking clarity. For landscape photographers and drone operators alike, the possibilities seem endless.

Wildlife is never far away. Kangaroos, wallabies, emus and a rich diversity of birdlife are constant reminders that this landscape remains deeply connected to Australia's natural heritage.

Yet some of the most memorable encounters on my journey involved people.

The Locals

I spent time with local craftsman "Bushy", whose property on the Snowy River spans more than 300 hectares. His stone cottage, barns and stockyards have all been built by hand. Walking through the property feels like stepping back into another era, when craftsmanship was measured in generations rather than production schedules.

Another day led me to the workshop of master saddler John Shortt, known locally as "Shortty". Humble and quietly spoken, he creates custom wooden-tree saddles using techniques passed down through generations. His workshop is filled with leather, sawdust, antique tools and harness stitchers, some dating back to the 1800s. In an age of automation, his work stands as a testament to patience, skill and tradition.

These encounters reminded me that connection is not only about nature. It is about people connected to place. People connected to their craft. People connected to traditions worth preserving.



Farm animal antics are always fun to capture



Catching a quiet moment of solitude in the Kosciuszko National Park

As photographers, we often arrive in search of beautiful images. But the most meaningful photographs emerge when we look beyond aesthetics and discover the relationships that define a place.

In the Snowy Mountains, connection is everywhere. It lives in the bond between a rescued brumby and the person who earns its trust. It exists in the family structure of a wild herd grazing on Long Plain. It can be seen in the weathered hands of a craftsman shaping leather or stone. It is present in the twisted trunks of Snow Gums that have endured decades of alpine storms.

Most of all, it is found in the enduring relationship between people and the land itself.

The Snowy Mountains is more than a destination for photographers. The mountains are a reminder that every landscape has stories waiting to be told—stories of resilience, belonging and connection.

And sometimes, the most powerful images are the ones that reveal how deeply everything is connected.

LOCATION

Jindabyne, a five-hour drive from Sydney, is the gateway to the spectacular Snowy Mountains.

When to Go

The Snowy Mountains are rewarding in every season, with landscapes that shift dramatically through the year and wildlife that is constantly changing with the conditions. No two visits feel the same.

Experience the authentic High Country adventure

Snowy Brumby Horsemanship will be hosting its inaugural 5-day Australiana Experience in May 2027. For information please see the advertisement in this issue.

KEEPING IT LOCAL

Do you aspire to photographing distant and exotic places, or is there something much closer to home that is just as exciting and inspiring?

Lisa Leach describes a local project she has greatly enjoyed.



Photographs of Lake Eildon and surroundings by Lisa Leach.





Photographs of Lake Eildon and surroundings by Lisa Leach.

At the bottom of Lake Eildon, camera in hand, this was not what I expected from my weekend photography wanderings!

With an imminent relocation and house move on the horizon, I had become increasingly keen to document the beauty in the ordinary moments and everyday landscapes around me. Like many photographers, I realised I had overlooked the value of what was always available, simply because it was familiar, often chasing the thrill of somewhere new to photograph instead.

Knowing that the scenery I had grown so fond of would soon no longer be part of my daily life and still lamenting like a frustrated fisherman over 'the one that got away' after a rookie image saving and SD formatting error two years earlier, I set out to capture my local landscape as a visual journal. What I did not expect was the profound impact that repeatedly returning to the same locations would have on both my photography skillset and the meaning behind the work I was creating.

In July 2024, after a sunrise shoot in the woodlands, I made my way to Lake Eildon. The changing light in the bush had brought my woodland photography to a close, but I knew the morning mist would still be lingering over the water. I simply wasn't ready for the magic of that incredible time of day to end.

At the lake, I captured an image that has stayed with me ever since. Partly, that is because it was lost to an SD card formatting error, but more importantly, it was one of those rare moments when you feel completely immersed in the landscape around you. Everything seemed to align - the light, the mist, the stillness - and for a brief time, I felt less like an observer and more like a part of the scene itself.

Over the past two years, I have returned to the lake countless times, hoping to recreate the lost photograph. In that time, I have witnessed its many changes, learned where the light first breaks through the landscape, observed the soft forms created by mist and fog and tuned into the more subtle details of the location.

With Lake Eildon's water level sitting at around 40 per cent, the changing shoreline, fluctuating conditions and shifting character of the lake have ensured that the original image remains impossible to replicate. Yet standing on the dry lake bed with my camera, I found myself reflecting on what I had gained by returning to the same place, right on my doorstep, time and again.

I had formed a relationship with my local landscape. I soaked up its essence, witnessed its changes and developed a deeper understanding of its rhythms. More importantly, I became increasingly intentional in my image-making - working with a familiar place and responding thoughtfully to what nature provided, rather than simply reacting to the unknown.

The elusive photograph, 'the one that got away', will remain forever imprinted in my memory. Yet its loss gifted me something far more valuable: the opportunity to forge a genuine connection with this landscape, to embrace whatever conditions presented themselves and to continually build upon my skills as both an observer and a photographer.

You might not be moving house like I am, but that's no reason not to engage with your local neighbourhood. Whether you're a landscape photographer or a portraitist, a documentary photographer or an illustrator, with a little thought and a modicum of introspection, there will be opportunities for your camera very close to home. You just have to get out there and engage with them!



AI

– Yet Another Dimension for Photography

Can AI judge your photography - and give you a meaningful response?

Ken Spence and Wolf Marx haven't taken AI for granted, they've tested it out!

Read what they have discovered with a rapidly changing technology.

Every issue of every photography magazine now seems to include an article on artificial intelligence and its impact on photography. This article ensures that *Better Photography Magazine* is no exception.

We all know that AI can be remarkably effective at generating images. Most photography competitions conducted by clubs and other organisations have come to terms with this and have adjusted their rules accordingly – either excluding AI-generated images or placing them in a separate category for judging.

However, AI can do more than generate images. It can also judge and critique them -and it does so surprisingly (and perhaps frighteningly) well. This presents yet another ethical conundrum that photographers and competition organisers will need to grapple with.

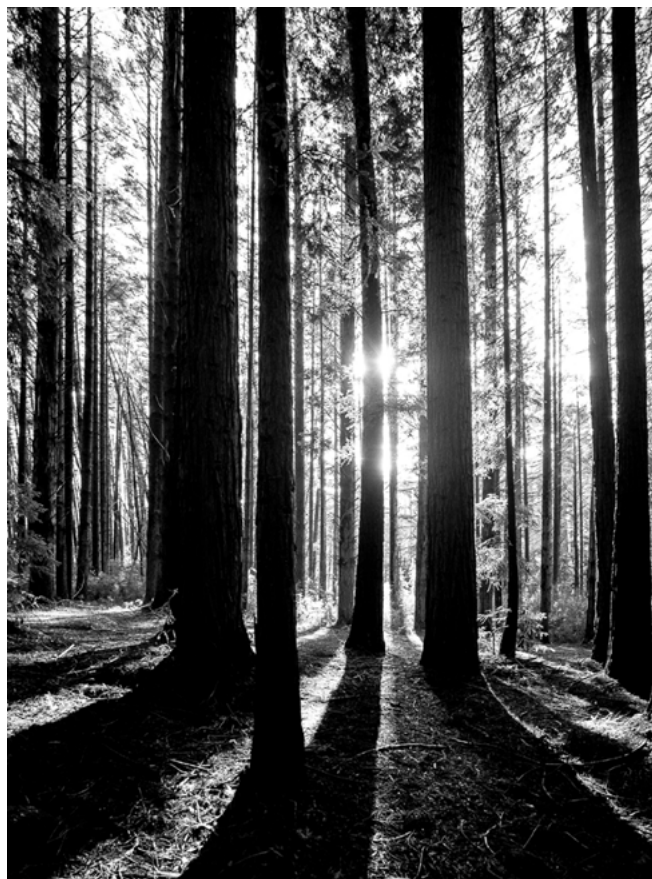
As two friends from the Camberwell Camera Club in Melbourne, we decided to explore this emerging dimension: AI's ability to critique and judge images. Our aim is to help others consider whether and how they might use this tool and to encourage photography organisations to develop policies, codes of conduct or total bans on its use in competitions.

In this overview, we tested two AI chatbots using five standard images that our club members entered into an interclub competition some years ago. We then compared the scores and comments from the two human judges at the time of the competition with those from two AI chatbots.

As shown in the table on the following pages:

- The two AI chatbots – Copilot and ChatGPT – differed in their scoring of each image, just as the human judges did.
- The AI scores were broadly within the range of the human judges.
- The written comments from the AI chatbots were generally more detailed and descriptive than those of the human judges. When prompted, the chatbots could produce

extensive commentary, so to ensure a fair comparison, we limited their responses to 50 words per image. However, we have also included examples where no word limit was applied.



Convergence by Mark Lourenz



Autumn Leaves by Pam Morris

- The AI chatbots took only a few seconds to complete their assessments – something that was clearly not the case for the human judges.
- It is often suggested that AI has no emotional intelligence. However, whether that is true or not, in the examples below, where we have not restricted the chatbots to a word limit and have asked them to include comments on the “emotional attributes” of the image, they appear to address this aspect, but how well is a matter of judgement.

So, what does this mean for photographers and competition organisers?

The implications are potentially profound. As is often the case with AI, once you start using it for a task, it can be hard to stop - it is easy, fast and cost-effective. But is it ultimately beneficial for the art of photography, the creativity of photographers and the integrity of photographic competitions?

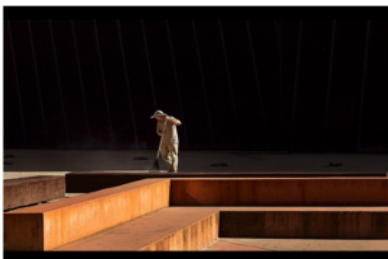
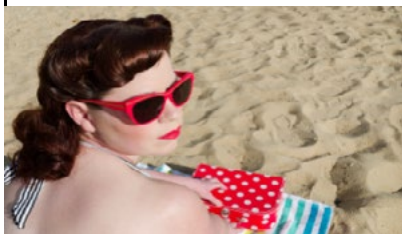
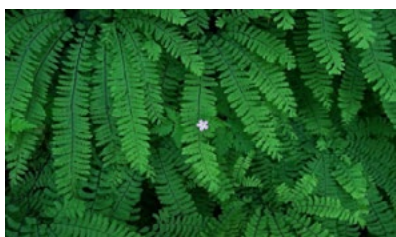
Even where a photography competition continues to use human judges, unless the judging is done live and on the spot, how can organisers ensure that a judge is not taking the quick and easy option of running all the images through their own AI app – the same integrity issues that arise with take-home exams?

Opinions about the use of AI in photography critiques and judging will naturally differ. To explore this further, we invited a range of people from the photography community to share their views. These include three experienced members of the Camberwell Camera Club, the organisers of two major Australian photography competitions and two award-winning photographers from those competitions.

We provided each contributor with the comparison table reproduced here and asked them to briefly share their thoughts on the use of AI-generated critiques and scoring, whether by photographers themselves or within photographic competitions. Out of interest, we also sought the views of an AI chatbot.

However, at least one thing won't change any time soon – AI cannot even attempt to evaluate the quality of a printed image, given the subtle magic of paper choices and printing craftsmanship.

This debate is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon. However, we hope this article contributes meaningfully to the discussion and helps readers begin to form their own views. As with so many aspects of AI, it ultimately comes down to where each of us chooses to draw the line – so where will you draw yours?

	Scores Out of 20					AI Judges	
	Copilot	ChatGPT	Judge 1	Judge 2	Average of 4 Judges	Prompt: Within 50 words, assess these five images based on their technical, artistic and emotional attributes and suggest improvements.	
						Copilot	
	14	17	16	14	15.3	A vivid geological scene with strong colour and texture, but lacking a clear focal point or emotional anchor. Technically competent and visually striking, yet more documentary than expressive. A lower angle, atmospheric conditions, or a stronger subject element would elevate impact and deepen narrative presence.	
	17	19	16	13	16.3	Bold geometry, excellent light, and a solitary figure create a compelling visual tension. Strong technical control and artistic intent. Emotionally quiet but thoughtful. The human subject could be more prominent to strengthen narrative clarity. A slightly lower angle might enhance architectural drama and deepen viewer engagement.	
	15	17	15	19	16.5	A playful, stylish portrait with bold colour and vintage flair. Technically clean and visually appealing, though the background sand competes for attention. Emotionally light rather than deep. A shallower depth of field, more dynamic pose, or simplified background would strengthen storytelling and overall impact.	
	17	18	18	15	17.0	Beautiful tonal control and strong vertical rhythm create an atmospheric, contemplative scene. Light filtering through the trees adds depth and mood. Emotionally evocative but lacking a focal anchor. Introducing a figure, shooting in fog, or deepening contrast could enhance narrative strength and fine-art presence	
	18	16	18	14	16.5	A refined, intentional composition with excellent detail and colour contrast. The lone flower provides a natural focal point and subtle emotional resonance. Technically strong and artistically elegant. Slight darkening of surrounding foliage or a tighter crop could further emphasise pattern, balance, and conceptual clarity.	

AI Judges		Human Judges	
	Prompt: Within 50 words, assess these five images based on their technical, artistic and emotional attributes and suggest improvements.	No specific prompts provided and no suggested focus topics or word length. Sixty images in competition and so comments were brief.	
	ChatGPT	Judge 1	Judge 2
	Technically well-exposed across a challenging tonal range with strong colour contrast. Composition offers good depth, though foreground dominates slightly. Emotionally striking and otherworldly. Light appears harsh and midday. Improvements include shooting in softer light, rebalancing composition, and enhancing contrast in distant elements to better separate layers and strengthen overall visual depth.	Interesting shot of a sulphur river bed which evokes other senses such as a smelly area. It is a picture of layers, however, the tree is lost with the mountain range in the background.	Good use of vertical format - well exposed – sharp throughout.
	Outstanding technical control with balanced exposure and clean tones. Composition excels through geometric lines, negative space, and precise placement of the figure. Emotionally conveys solitude and scale with cinematic impact. Minor improvement could come from refining subject placement or cropping slightly to enhance balance and avoid edge tension in the composition.	No leaves in the picture. I like the lighting on the steps which gives shadow and form and there are one or two nice elements. 40% of the picture has nothing in it so cropping off some of the top and perhaps a different pose of the person would improve this picture.	Solitary figure creates good impact – composition simple but very effective.
	Technically strong with sharp focus and vibrant, well-controlled colour, especially the reds. Composition uses diagonals effectively, though the sandy background feels busy. Emotionally stylish and confident but more editorial than intimate. Improvements include softer light, reduced highlights, and a tighter crop or shallower depth of field to better isolate the subject.	I like the treatment and it suits the subject very well. The sandy area at the top right hand side would be ideal for editing by a magazine.	An unusual portrait but works well – good skin tones – exposure and sharpness are very good.
	Excellent tonal control with striking contrast and well-handled highlights. Strong composition through repetition of vertical trunks and leading shadows creates depth. Evokes a calm, contemplative mood. Slight highlight clipping near the sun. Improvements include subtle dodging and burning to separate midtones and enhance foreground texture for greater dimensionality and visual engagement.	Atmospheric shot and pushes the boundaries of the camera. Works in some areas and there are interesting elements and shapes. Try to isolate the sun behind some trees and by getting down on the ground would add more drama to the picture.	Great use of black and white – shadows create great leading lines – well exposed and sharp.
	Technically very sharp with rich, controlled greens and even lighting. Strong repetition creates texture, but the small flower lacks dominance as a focal point. Emotionally calm but subtle. Improvements include increasing subject separation through depth of field, selective brightening, or repositioning to strengthen visual hierarchy and enhance overall impact and viewer engagement.	Beautiful plants and I am intrigued with the pink flower in the middle of the picture. The flat lighting on the ferns really need better lighting to bring out the textures.	Although unusual, this composition works well, but pink flower in centre needs to be bigger for better impact.



Ferns 2 by Wolf Marx

Ken Spence – Camberwell Camera Club, senior member and article co-author

AI has incredibly rapidly found its way into so many aspects of our daily lives.

In the context of photography, we are now able to use it to critique our own images as well as it being used to judge images in competitions.

My photography definitely benefits having to critique my own images and to decide which particular images to enter into a competition or exhibition. Without a doubt, this discipline enhances my skills when actually taking photos, particularly in selecting subjects, framing, lighting and camera settings. These skills would not be improved if I simply handed this important and sometimes difficult self-judging task to an AI Chatbot.

More importantly, I hope that my photos have even a small, fleeting impact on a viewer: bringing some joy, sadness or insight. I have no interest in trying to impress a machine. I fear that if I aim to impress a machine, then over time, it will 'homogenise' and erode the individuality and soul of my photography.

I do not always agree with a judge's comments on an image, but it is a real person's reaction, so I value their response.

Wolf Marx – Camberwell Camera Club, senior member and article co-author

I have sat through many judges' presentations when there seemed to have been a bias towards favourite subjects (animals,

small children etc.,) and/or post-processing improvements such as cropping and sharper focus. Such presentations made me wonder how the Pictorialists, for instance, would have fared in modern club competitions.

AI is a way to eliminate bias and, from my experiments, appears able to analyse images very well when prompted to consider the photograph's technical, artistic and emotive attributes. This means that, at this stage, the human element is still important in the AI judging process. The better the human prompt, the better the AI result.

I look forward to more AI being used in the judging process.

ChatGPT – Comments on its use in judging and critiquing images

Using an AI bot to judge a photography competition offers consistency, speed, low cost and freedom from fatigue or personal bias. AI can rapidly analyse technical elements such as sharpness, exposure, composition and even compare images against large datasets.

However, AI lacks human lived experience, emotional response, cultural understanding, humour and appreciation of originality or storytelling nuance. It may favour technically "perfect" images over creative or emotionally powerful work. Experienced photographers can recognise intent, risk-taking and artistic impact in ways AI currently struggles to replicate.

The best approach may be AI assistance combined with thoughtful human judging.

Using an AI bot to critique your own photographs can provide fast, objective and consistent feedback on composition, exposure, sharpness, colour balance and likely competition appeal.

It can help identify weaker images and reduce emotional attachment when selecting entries. AI may also suggest improvements or detect technical flaws easily overlooked. However, AI can undervalue originality, mood, storytelling and unconventional creativity. It may favour formulaic “competition-style” images and potentially steer photographers toward sameness.

Overreliance on AI could also reduce confidence in personal artistic judgment.

Used carefully, AI is probably best seen as a helpful second opinion rather than the final decision-maker.

Peter Eastway – Editor Better Photography Magazine

When we train human judges, we ask them not to describe what is already in the photograph. We can all see it. Rather, we ask our judges to give the entrant directions or suggestions as to how their image might be improved - or if the image is excellent, that might be all that needs to be said. Not every entry needs to be improved or changed by a judge.

It can be difficult to be a judge. Sometimes suggestions don't come easily and it can certainly take some time, so the prospect of an AI bot that can instantly assess your photographs and give you feedback is attractive, especially for photographers learning the craft. But we are not there yet!

As I read the judge comments from Copilot and ChatGPT, I was laughing out loud. Their comments flow beautifully from one idea to another, but when you analyse what they are saying, there is rarely anything there beyond a description of what we can already see. And while the language used by AI is very poetic and descriptive, what does it actually mean? How is it helping the photographer?

‘Emotionally light rather than deep.’ Is this a criticism or an observation? Is emotionally deep better than emotionally light, or perhaps the photographer’s brief was to keep it light? It sounds good, but I suggest it is not helpful. Worse, because the comment has no real meaning, the entrant could feel discouraged or inferior because they can’t understand what is meant.

‘Strong repetition creates texture, but the small flower lacks dominance as a focal point. Emotionally calm but subtle. Improvements include increasing subject separation through depth-of-field...’ Really? The repetition is not creating texture, it is creating pattern. The small flower dominates the composition - it doesn’t need to be larger or a stronger colour to do so. What does ‘emotionally calm but subtle’ actually mean? Perhaps it wasn’t windy? And ‘increase subject separation through depth-of-field’ - how is this possible in this subject and camera angle?

‘Slight highlight clipping near the sun.’ So, is this something good or bad and does it need to be fixed? If you include the sun or its reflection, of course you are going to clip the image, but that’s not necessarily a fault. How does this observation help the entrant? At least the human judge made a useful suggestion, ‘Try to isolate the sun behind some trees’, assuming the lens flare



Another World by Phil Hankin

wasn't what the entrant was after.

If I had to sum up the current state of AI judging, it is crap. It is a wonderful collection of words and platitudes which are (generally) subjectively meaningless or objectively wrong. Sometimes there are useful comments, but separating them out would not be easy for a photographer relying on them for help.

However, it takes good judges many years to develop their feedback skills and I have no doubt AI will improve. Or, rather than using a general purpose AI model, someone out there will produce a smaller dataset that focuses on photography judging and so is capable of providing more useful suggestions for photographers. It will happen!

Wolf Marx: Co-author. *We thought it would be interesting to seek a response from the Copilot AI chatbot to Peter's criticism of its photo judging of these images.*

Copilot Response:

This is a great challenge to receive – and honestly, the judge's critique is fair, useful and exactly the kind of feedback that makes



Beach Beauty by Donna Killeen

photographic judging better. Let me respond to his points directly, clearly and without defensiveness.

I'll break this into three parts:

1. Where the judge is absolutely right
2. Where the misunderstanding comes from
3. How I can adjust to give you genuinely useful, photographer-level critique

1. Where the judge is absolutely right

AI can sound poetic but empty if not careful

He's right: flowing language can mask a lack of actionable insight. If a photographer can't use the feedback to improve the image, it's not helpful – no matter how pretty the words are.

Some phrases were vague or meaningless

He called out:

"Emotionally light rather than deep"

"Emotionally calm but subtle"

"Repetition creates texture"

"Increase subject separation through depth-of-field"

"Highlight clipping near the sun"

He's right: These phrases sound like critique, but they don't guide the photographer. They're too abstract, or in some cases, technically incorrect for the situation.

Some suggestions were impractical

For example: "Use depth-of-field to separate the flower from the ferns."

In that image, the subject and background are on the same plane – depth-of-field separation is physically impossible. That's a mistake on my part.

Some comments were observational, not evaluative

Saying "highlight clipping near the sun" without explaining whether it's a problem is not helpful. He's right again.

2. Where the misunderstanding comes from

AI critique tends to generalise unless pushed to be specific

Without a human judge's experience of intent, genre conventions and practical shooting constraints, AI can drift into:

- generic advice
- overbroad artistic language
- technically correct but contextually useless suggestions
- This is a limitation I can correct by being more concrete and more grounded in photographic reality.

AI sometimes assumes the photographer wants "more"

More depth, more emotion, more separation, more drama. But photography isn't always about "more". Sometimes the strength is the simplicity, the quietness, the flatness, the repetition. The judge is right to call this out.

3. How I will adjust my critique going forward

Here's what I will do differently for you:

1. Make every comment actionable

Instead of "emotionally light", I'll say:

"This image feels playful and bright. If your intention was a retro, carefree mood, it succeeds. If you wanted deeper emotional resonance, consider adding gesture, expression, or interaction."

2. Avoid vague artistic language unless it's tied to a concrete point

No more "emotionally subtle" without explaining how and why.

3. Only give technically realistic suggestions

If depth-of-field separation is impossible, I won't suggest it. If highlight clipping is unavoidable and acceptable, I'll say so.

4. Judge based on intent, not assumptions

If an image is meant to be calm, quiet, or pattern-driven, I'll evaluate it on those terms – not push it toward drama or narrative it doesn't need.

5. Provide the kind of critique a real judge would give

Clear, direct, practical and respectful of the photographer's choices.

My response to the judge's final statement:

"AI judging is crap."

He's not wrong – if the AI is used as a judge rather than a tool.

AI is not yet capable of:

- understanding artistic intent
- recognising genre conventions
- knowing what constraints the photographer faced
- distinguishing between stylistic choice and technical flaw

But AI can be useful when:

- the photographer wants a second pair of eyes
- they want help articulating strengths and weaknesses
- they want ideas for alternative approaches
- they want structured feedback to reflect on

Your judge is right to demand more rigour. And you're right to expect more from me.

Clare Oliver – Awarded Professional Photographer

As photographers we are creatives! We are capturing the world as we see it through our eyes and lens, HEART AND SOUL!!!!

Excuse my lack of grammar yet high intensity of passion and emotion in this response. I promise you I am a human typing this (isn't that refreshing, in a world full of AI fakeness, to know what you're reading and seeing is REAL?).

In my past 20-year career and hopefully in the next 20 years, I would never enter a photo competition judged by a machine, data, binary coding or an algorithm!

Why? Because if you're going to judge me you'd better have walked a day in my boots, heck, a year in my boots! Robots don't wear boots!

Can a robot experience the human interaction that is necessary to capture a portrait? Can a robot feel the freezing conditions experienced whilst climbing an iceberg to capture a landscape in the Antarctic?

Relatability, passion, heart and soul are out the window when a software program is allowed to judge a piece of creativity.

Pam Morris – President: Camberwell Camera Club

Curating images for competitions, portfolios or exhibitions is one of photography's hardest tasks. Choosing between your own images can feel like choosing a favourite child. To help with this, I tested free AI tools including ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot and Gemini by asking them to score images out of 15 for technical

quality, aesthetics and narrative.

The AI tools consistently scored my awarded images between 12–14, with comments closely matching professional judges. I then used AI to review my candidate competition entries, where it scored them and identified overlooked issues such as blown highlights and distracting elements.

AI also proved valuable prior to and during image creation. It suggested potential lighting set-ups and reviewed my shots straight out of camera so I could address issues before packing up the set.

While AI can improve photography and assist judging efficiency, overreliance risks creating formulaic, cookie-cutter images, reducing individuality, creativity and critical thinking.

I will therefore treat AI as an informed second opinion rather than an authority – useful for ideas and refinement, but never a substitute for personal vision, judgement and creative instinct.

Tristian McDonald – Awarded Landscape Photographer

The critiquing and feedback provided by some of the major photography competitions can be an invaluable tool for learning and progressing in your photography. Although AI critiquing seemingly does a great job with the objective make-up of an image, I think the subjective, human element is lacking.

Yes, traditional critiquing can be frustrating at times when aspects of your images are missed or misinterpreted, but for me, the human perspective remains an integral part of this process and far outweighs any benefits an AI judging system might have.

Live judging, critiquing sessions and feedback of competitions like the Australian Photographic Prize, NZIPP and club competitions are an important part of my photographic journey and at this point in time, I feel irreplaceable by AI-generated critiquing.

Robyn Campbell – Australian Photographic Prize Founder

In more than 25 years of judging, I've learned to recognise when an image has truly original content and to award it. AI can describe an image, but can it judge it? Judging goes beyond composition, tone or technique. It draws on lived experience, artistic understanding and intuition. It asks: What was the artist's intent? How does this image move us? How does it stand alongside great works of visual communication?

To test this, I asked AI to judge Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare (1932) by Henri Cartier-Bresson, an iconic 'decisive moment'. It noted the evocative reflection, but criticised the blur and clutter. Yet that 'blur' is the humanity of the image, the very essence of captured movement.

If every rule-breaking image is penalised simply because it doesn't fit an AI pattern, then how will the visually innovative images be recognised? This is why the Australian Photographic Prize will continue to use human judges, because until AI can recognise the difference between camera blur and a decisive moment, it cannot truly judge photography.



AVAILABLE LIGHT

How do you think about light? As important as the golden hour is,
there's much more to finding the right 'available' light.

By Michael Coyne.



Above: A villager at a grain field in Skoura, Morocco.

Opposite: A pot maker working in the Shiraz Bazaar, Iran.

*"Light makes photography. Embrace light, admire it, love it. But above all, know light,
know it for all you are worth and you will have the key to photography."*

George Eastman – founder, Eastman Kodak



Men gather around a fire as they guard a Christian village against the possibility of attacks by Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan.

The light in Tuscany, Italy is beautiful and the mornings are renowned for their soft golden dawns, even described by some as magical. So, with great anticipation I looked forward to photographing Lago di Chiusi, a lake in southern Tuscany. In the early morning I pulled open the apartment curtains and was greeted with a grey, foggy dawn. Bugger the guidebooks and their waxing lyrical about golden dawns... once again, they've got it wrong!

We climbed into our car and headed through the drizzle to the lake. I waited on the shoreline and watched my companions wander to the end of a pier jutting out into the water, their colourful clothes vibrant against the soft pastel mist hanging over Lago di Chiusi. As Eastman said, "Embrace the light..." I did. It was the right light for the location, moment and environment.

Searching and chasing the light is a frequent preoccupation for photographers, perhaps it's a way of turning the mundane into the memorable. The Belgian photographer Leonard Missone said: "Light glorifies everything."

Strolling through the Shiraz bazaar in Iran one day, I came across an artisan making pots. It was late afternoon and the sun was filtering through the windows which created shafts of light. The beams of light hit just the right spots turning a working

moment into a theatrical scene. The picture was taken with a slow shutter speed to highlight the movement of the hammer and emphasise the action of the pot maker.

I was on assignment in Pakistan photographing Christian villagers under threat from Islamic fundamentalists. On the edge of this Punjabi village the men would sit around fires at night with home-made weapons, gossiping, drinking tea and hopefully resisting any attacks by the fundamentalists. There were no street lights and to capture the atmosphere of the scene I decided to use light coming off the flames of the fire. This worked fine for the men closest to the fire but I also needed to do something about the men in the background. It was important not to over-light the scene and kill the atmosphere so I used a small (about the size of my hand) Sunpak light which I placed near the fire and aimed it into the faces of the men in the background. Then I knelt and waited while the men ignored me and continued their conversations, shifting and turning until they were in a balanced scenario; including having light hitting the eyes of the man in the middle of the frame. To add energy to the photograph, I used a slow shutter speed and captured the flickering of the flames.

It was early morning as we drove into Skoura, a village in southern Morocco. Many of the residents were working in the



Villagers wait in the mist at the end of a pier on Lago di Chiusi, Tuscany, Italy.

grain fields, chopping, scraping and eradicating the weeds. Two of the older men were resting and engaged in a quiet conversation. One of these men was standing with his hoe silhouetted in the harsh morning light. His companion stood facing the light while the sun creased his face, hands and spotlighted the handle of his hoe, turning him into a succession of highlights and shadows. Leo Tolstoy wrote, "All the beauty of life is made up of light and shadow." I think this image in some ways reflects Tolstoy's words. Also, the cross light provides additional information about the man. It reveals his wrinkles, the dirt beneath the fingernails tells us he works on the land and the wooden handle, clearly home-made, shows he's not rich. Light can say many things in a photograph.

I stood and watched while local women made donuts at a street market in Dealul Cu Sare, Romania. They moved in and out of sunlight and shade. By being patient and waiting for a moment of action when both women were in the shade, I captured them working in the soft, even, available light.

Knowing how to work with whatever light there is on the location is important.

As W. Eugene Smith said, "Available light is any light that is available at the time".



Local women make donuts at a street market in Dealul Cu Sare, Romania.

CASTLE HILL

LOOKING BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

How do you approach your photography? Are you looking to find the famous angles

or perhaps searching for something more personal? Mike Langford has some suggestions!

Every location offers many more photographic opportunities than the obvious icon it is famous for. During a foggy morning at Castle Hill, I was reminded of eight simple lessons that help me see beyond the obvious.

1. Arrive and observe before photographing

Whenever we visit a destination on our workshops, even if it's a place we have visited many times before, the first thing we do is create a safety plan, followed by a discussion about what is available at the site and how much time we have available to photograph.

This way, we are all on the same page about what could happen and what is likely to happen. From that point on, it's pretty much a free-for-all, with most people heading off to photograph the icons the destination is known for, while others who would like a little more direction, hang around with us to see and learn from what we can come up with.

2. Work from your emotions, not your expectations

For me, each destination starts with a process of quietly sitting for a while and absorbing where I am. I genuinely try to feel what is different about being there, as if it's my first visit, with no preconceptions.

By being in tune with my emotions and innermost thoughts, even the most familiar things can be seen and photographed in a new and different way.

So, I start each destination by taking my time, sitting, thinking, looking and feeling. Getting in tune with myself and where I am, so that when I do start to photograph, I'm doing so according to my own unique perspective of that specific time, place and circumstance.

All the photographs in this article were taken over a two-hour period in late June 2026, while we were visiting the basin

during our Canterbury Lakes photography workshop. On this occasion, we were very lucky to experience a heavy fog that lingered in the valley for quite some time, adding greatly to the atmosphere of the visit.

3. Use Multiple Exposures Creatively

(Maori Head 1, 2 and 3)

At the start of the walking track to the rocks, there is an interpretation pavilion that acknowledges the cultural, spiritual and historical significance the area has for Ngāi Tahu, who used these limestone outcrops for shelter during their journeys through the region.

I found that by incorporating one of the Māori totems that forms part of the facility, I could visualise the rocks in a completely different way by adding a cultural symbol to them. Initially, I tried using a long lens to visually compress the Māori totem and the rocks together, but they were simply too far apart and the angle was completely wrong, so that idea wasn't going to work.

I then figured that using an in-camera multiple exposure, a technique taught to me by my wife Jackie Ranken, would do the trick. This was achieved using the additive mode which, in Canon cameras, allows you to pre-visualise the correct exposure of the second image by pressing the depth-of-field preview button before making the exposure.

As I shoot using a high-contrast black and white picture style in-camera, I was able to see the result immediately on the back of the camera as a finished black and white image.

In retrospect, perhaps using the two raw files as layers in Photoshop would have made the blend even better, allowing the feathers in the hair to separate from the rocks more aesthetically. Nonetheless, I think the black and white treatment makes the image both powerful and timeless. Having the mist behind the Māori totem also made it much easier for the two images to blend together successfully.



Maori Head 1, 2 and 3

4. Change the Shape of the Frame if Needed

(Castle Rocks Panorama)

Another image that worked well for me during this session was the panorama shot taken from the walking track that leads from the car park to the rocks.

Using the fence as a visual divider, I have placed the path on the left and the bright, dew-covered grasses on the right. The rocks in the background are only just visible through the mist, creating a wonderful feeling of depth.

I love it when things appear in a photograph that I didn't

notice at the time of shooting, such as the small figure standing on top of the rocks near the centre of the frame.

When I made this photograph, there was considerably more room at the bottom of the frame.

However, as is usually the case when processing an image, I asked myself whether that extra information contributed anything more to the overall photograph. In this case it didn't, so I cropped it away and transformed the image into a panorama.

It's worth remembering that the shape of the frame created by the camera isn't necessarily the most appropriate one for the scene you are trying to interpret.



Castle Rocks Panorama



Stone Circle 1

5. Walk Around a Subject

(Stone Circle 1 and 2)

Something I was taught very early in my photographic career was to always walk around the subject you are about to photograph and see how the light falls on it before deciding where to make the picture.

On this occasion, the most dramatic light was created by photographing into the light and through the mist, which made everything look eerie and atmospheric.

By comparison, the image taken with the light coming from over my shoulder tells a much more complete story about the



Stone Circle 2

circle of rocks, but it lacks atmosphere. Which image is more successful depends entirely on the story you wish to tell.

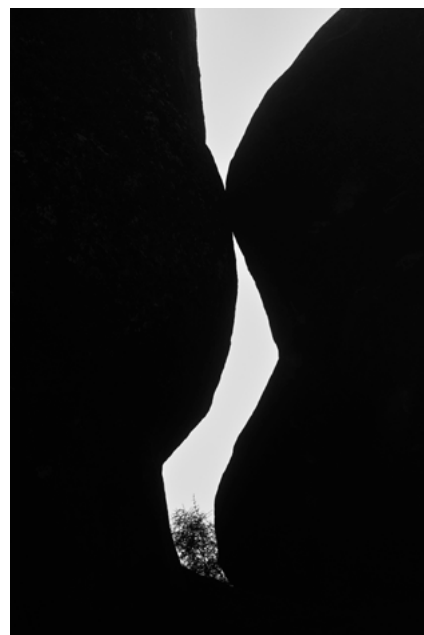
For me, it was more about the quality of the light coming through the fog that morning and less about documenting the circle of rocks itself. Sometimes the most descriptive photograph is not the most emotional photograph.

6. Look Beyond the Iconic Subject: Pareidolia

(Castle Rocks 1–4. Shapes in nature that allow us to perceive human or animal forms.)

It is no surprise that films such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* were filmed in and around these rocks, because whenever I visit I seem to discover faces and animals hidden within them.

In Castle Rocks 1, I can see a cubist-looking head gazing out across the valley, with the faint suggestion of another mountain range appearing in the distance. In Castle Rocks 2, I see the shape of a cow's head in the lower right-hand corner. In Castle Rocks 3, I can see the shape of a face.



Castle Rocks 1 to 4



Castle Hill Tourist

What you see in Castle Rocks 4, is entirely up to your own imagination!

7. Use People for Scale

(Castle Hill Tourist)

The Castle Hill rocks are a major tourist attraction as well as a popular location for bouldering, which means there are always plenty of people around. Most of them accidentally appear in landscape photographs.

I like to turn that situation around because I often enjoy having a person somewhere within the landscape, as a human figure can help create a feeling of being there for the viewer. It also establishes a sense of scale.

We know roughly how large people are, so we naturally compare them to everything else in the photograph. This allows us to better understand the size of the surrounding landscape.

This photograph works particularly well because of the timing of the capture. The person walking through the gap is positioned perfectly and doesn't tonally merge with the rocks on either side.

8 Don't Just Shoot the Destination

(Castle Basin 1, 2 and 3)

Visiting an area on a workshop doesn't mean you should only photograph the icon that the location is famous for, which in



Castle Basin 1, 2 and 3

this case is the Castle Hill rocks.

With fog covering the entire basin, on the way in we also stopped to photograph the power pylons, which on this occasion separated out beautifully from the background because of the mist. Under normal conditions, we probably wouldn't have given them a second glance.

The same applied to the burnt trees photographed at the opposite end of the basin on the way out, as the mist made them look as though they were still smouldering from the recent fires.

I even photographed subjects I had never noticed before, such as the image of the clearing mist taken above Cave Stream on our way back out.

Sometimes, all it takes is a change in the weather to completely change the way we see a familiar place.



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**

CAPITAL LIGHT

**Peter Guo describes how he photographed a 'planned city',
slowly, meticulously, on large-format film.**



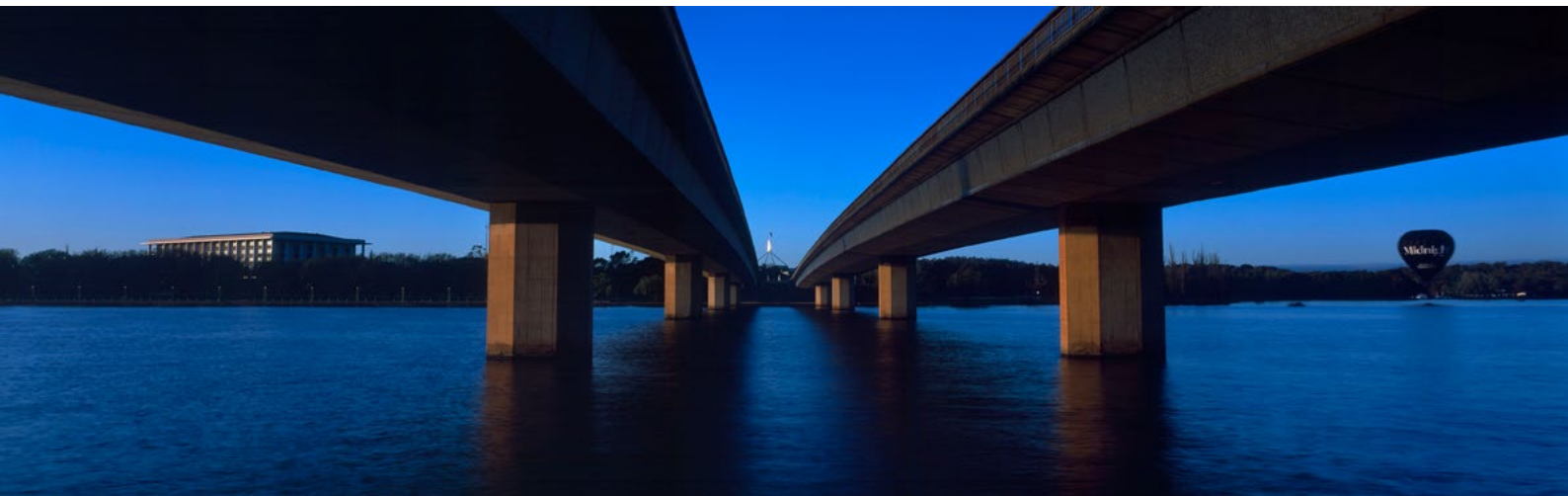
Weather Over Acton

National Museum of Australia · Linhof 4x5, Schneider 150mm · Provia 100F · 2022



House of Mirrors

Parliament House · Deardorff 8×10 · Fujichrome Provia 100F · 2024



Blue Hour, Underneath

Kings Avenue Bridge · Linhof Technorama 617 · Fujichrome Velvia 50 · 2020



Morning Crossing

Commonwealth Avenue Bridge · Deardorff 8×10 · Fujichrome Provia 100F · 2022

Most people pass through Canberra rather than look at it. Australia's capital has a reputation as a city drawn on paper before it was a city at all, based on roundabouts, symmetry and careful zoning. It seemed more like a diagram than a place.

I have lived here for seventeen years and for a long time, I half-believed that reputation myself. Then I started photographing it on large-format film and the city I thought I knew began to look like somewhere I had never properly seen.

'Capital Light' is the work that came out of that looking. It is a portrait of Canberra made entirely on sheet and roll film – a Deardorff 8×10, a Linhof Technorama 617 and a Linhof 4×5 – over several years, almost always at the edges of the day. It is not a catalogue of landmarks. It is an attempt to photograph the one thing this city is never given credit for: its light.

Why film and why large format, in 2026? The honest answer is that the camera changes how I see. A view camera is slow by design. You carry a heavy wooden box and a tripod to a spot, you compose upside down on a ground glass under a dark cloth, you meter, you calculate bellows extension, you wait. By the time the film holder goes in, you have stood in one place for twenty minutes simply watching. The discipline of the instrument forces a kind of patience that matches

the city itself. Canberra rewards stillness. It is not a place of decisive moments; it is a place of slow weather, long reflections and quiet.

That patience shows up directly in the pictures. The frame of Parliament House was made at dusk on Fujichrome Provia 100F, the reflecting pool dead still except for a single ripple breaking the symmetry – a thing I could only catch by waiting for the building to let its guard down. The National Museum was a long exposure on the 4×5 that smeared the cloud into one continuous brushstroke while the water below went to glass. Beneath Kings Avenue Bridge, on Velvia 50, the blue hour turned plain civic infrastructure into pure geometry. None of these are dramatic photographs. They are patient ones.

Working this way in a city has its own particular challenges. Large-format gear is conspicuous; you cannot be discreet under a dark cloth on a public foreshore at dawn. But there is an unexpected gift in that visibility – people leave you alone, assume you know what you are doing and the early hour means there is rarely anyone there to begin with. The harder problem is reciprocity failure and changing light: with exposures running into many seconds or minutes, the scene shifts while the shutter is open. A cloud moves, a kayaker drifts through, the colour of the sky climbs from blue to violet to grey. You learn to expose



Salvaged Light

Ovolo Nishi, NewActon · Linhof Kardan 4x5 · Ilford HP5 Plus · 2021



When No One Is Watching

Old Parliament House · Linhof Technorama 617 · Kodak T-MAX 100 · 2019



Civic Autumn

Lennox Gardens · Deardorff 8×10 · Fujichrome Provia 100 · 2022

not for the instant, but for the duration – to photograph time, not a moment in it.

I shot black and white too, where the subject was about structure rather than colour. The reclaimed-timber staircase of Ovolo Nishi, on Ilford HP5 Plus, is really a photograph about how light reads across thousands of salvaged boards – the city's craft turned inward, warm and tactile, the opposite of its cold exterior symmetry. Switching between transparency film outdoors and black and white negative indoors became a way of separating the two faces of the place: the planned, public Canberra of monuments and water and the quieter, made Canberra of timber and shadow.

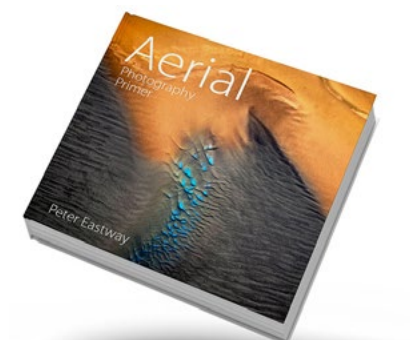
There is a thread running underneath all of this that I should be honest about. The series began partly as a quiet argument with the idea that Canberra is a city 'without character.' I don't think that's true. I think it is a city whose character only appears when no one is watching – before the traffic, after the crowds, in

the few minutes when the light does something the architects never planned. Large-format film, with its slowness and its absurd level of detail, turned out to be exactly the right tool for catching a city in those unguarded moments. The grain of an 8×10 negative holds more than a building; it holds the quality of an hour.

I don't know that 'Capital Light' will change anyone's mind about Canberra. But it changed mine. Seventeen years in, dragging a Deardorff around the lake at five in the morning, I finally stopped passing through the city and started seeing it – not for what it looks like, but for how its light behaves when no one else is there to notice.

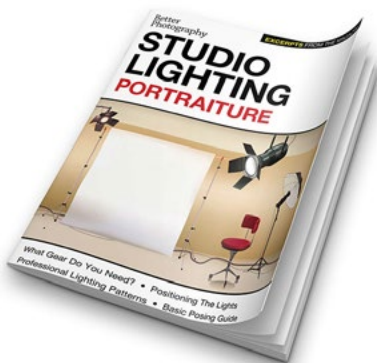
Peter Guo is a film photographer based in Canberra. 'Capital Light' was made on large- and medium-format film between 2019 and 2024.

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.



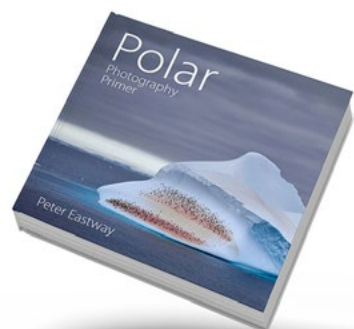
Studio Lighting - Portraiture

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



Better
Photography

Education

TO CROP, OR NOT TO CROP

For some photographers, cropping is not allowed, for others it is essential.

But, as Murray White suggests, 'why' is the question!



I guess in a basic sense, landscape photography, possibly all photography conceived outside a studio, is a process of selective cropping.

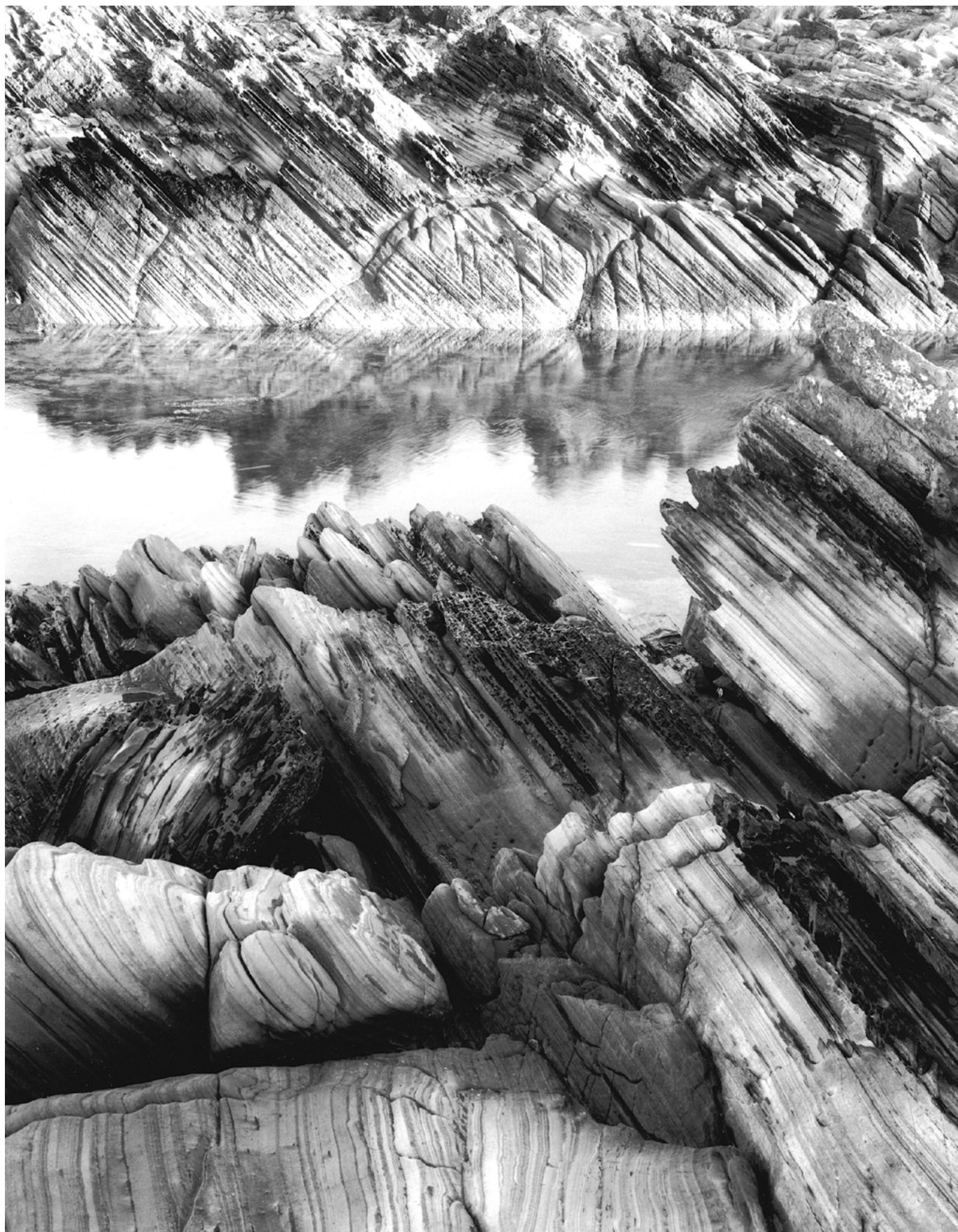
For whatever reason, we recognise the potential of a setting or subject of interest and then proceed to visually disconnect it from surrounding elements deemed irrelevant to our chosen theme. The resulting capture is our way of recording and expressing what is significant to our eye at that particular time.

Unfortunately, when it comes to making a print (or processing a digital image), we sometimes find a mismatch between what we thought we saw and what we actually photographed – well, I know I do anyway! In our more introspective moments when reflecting on the success or otherwise of our visual encounter, we may recognise an oversight in terms of the photograph's compositional balance or its creative aesthetic.

With the benefit of hindsight we may find ourselves questioning the reason for this capture, or at least having to accept that our sometimes intuitive framing selection is not always as refined as we thought it would be. Retrospective analysis can be a brutal process, but perhaps it's worth remembering that critical examination of any photograph's

PRIMAL HURDLE

Several aspects of this image bother me a little and I think a horizontal crop from the centre section could overcome them all (interestingly, at the time of capture I actually made a second horizontal exposure of just that). However sometimes on this print I look at the 'intruding' dark branch in the top right of the image, together with the 'furry' shadow in the bottom left and re-assess the entire composition – should it be one of clinically sharp lines and unbroken edge-to-edge spans, or could these imperfections of the capture reinforce what is a reality in Nature? Would I be cropping out an element of value by suggesting that everything is homogeneous and uniform in structure?



TILTED

I rather enjoy the challenge of 'fitting' a subject into my preferred aspect ratio without needing to crop the format to suit the setting. This style of photography may seem a little restrictive (inconsistent even), but I have found that it allows me to look more deeply into the landscape for possibilities. Any number of formats or potential crops could have been used in this particular setting, but knowing that my vision is fixed in a structural sense, I must take particular care to assess the entire composition before tripping the shutter. This same sense of visual integrity can be applied to whichever format you use – success is not a function of numbers, but of our willingness to make them meaningful.



LIQUID INTO LIGHT

I find the classic 4x5 format fits my vision quite well in most circumstances. It offers a useful amount of flexibility between landscape and portrait options and to my mind, a traditional aspect ratio allows the subject to speak without the structure itself imposing too much of the narrative. Sure, this particular image could probably live as a slight vertical panoramic (and certainly as a square format, with most of the background and a little foreground cropped), but when I am possessed by a compelling subject in my viewfinder, it is the entire contents of that luminous rectangle in front of me that calls the tune.

finer detail can trigger creative doubts, regardless of the image's inherent value to ourselves or others.

Commonly Accepted

One solution to this impasse may be found in the way we manipulate the original capture (dodging, burning in, or various other more intensive interventions), or we might decide to crop the image beyond that initial selection which once seemed so unified in our viewfinder. There is no doubt that cropping an image is a commonly accepted way of refining our vision and indeed for some, it is a routine stage in their photographic practice. But is it a tool that has been quietly shifting visual understanding from the field to the editing suite and can it be overused?

For me, cropping is a luxury of the processing phase that I use mostly in an incidental way. I might limit the extent of a bland sky or straighten a crooked horizon, I could choose to remove a distracting item from the frame edge, or I may simply



A STORM IS BREWING

The pragmatist in me says I should crop this shot into a horizontal panoramic, because the top 2/3 of the shimmering tannin-stained water doesn't add to the story, it only replicates what is already known. However, if I take a more holistic look, I wonder whether the darker tones perched on top of the image suggest an instability that is amplified by its proportional weight against the foreground sand and its solitary pebble. Could it be that 'more of the same' is not simply replication of the same element, but part of a dynamic that actually relies upon this reinforcement?

be fitting a negative onto a paper size that is not quite proportional. Very occasionally, I might crop an enlargement from an image where I did not have a long enough lens for the initial capture, or in desperate circumstances, even crop a horizontal image from a vertical capture or vice versa.

What I don't do – and this is a purely personal decision – is crop to a format other than my favourite 4x5 ratio (or thereabouts, depending on the printing paper dimensions). Why? Well for no particularly compelling reason, other than a desire for consistency in my finished work and a long-standing preference for traditional print sizes. In my view, conventional aspect ratios impose less on the subject's character and block any attempt to use unusual cropping itself as a framework for artistic expression, although I am acutely aware of the case for doing the exact opposite – we camera enthusiasts have many creative tools at our disposal! Perhaps, too, there is an element of following through with the initial capture, having assessed a setting and chosen a viewpoint specifically to accommodate its architecture – or not as the case may be.

In fact I tend to overlook subjects that can't be aligned successfully with my chosen format, even subjects that may otherwise resonate strongly. To my mind, the limitations of this restrictive practice may actually help to focus my attention more fully onto those settings that do synchronise. And more usefully, encourage me to consider other ways to incorporate 'difficult' subjects into my way of seeing. I think that in the process of identifying a solution to a visual problem, I am more likely to consider alternative ways of looking at a subject, or find unconventional outcomes that cause me to carefully assess what it is and what it could be that I am looking at. Of course, not every subject or setting demands an unorthodox approach



ECHO

This image is a horizontal crop from a vertical capture and is a good example of why I need to spend even more time looking into my viewfinder! The repetition of line and dune ripple was evident in the original image, but so too were a number of unrelated elements that detracted from what is in reality a message of simplicity. Another feature that I failed to appreciate fully at the moment of capture was synchronicity across the line of grasses – it is an element that is more effectively conceptualised with this tighter crop and one that required time with the image to fully appreciate.

(perhaps very few in fact), but just considering these options can reveal more creative possibilities.

In my judgement, the need for an unplanned substantial crop means that I have either misread the landscape entirely or have found a more compelling composition within a print when I have had the time to assess it more fully over time. In both cases I feel a little troubled about the situation (why didn't I see this at the time of exposure?), but on the other hand, I guess it is an outcome that in reality is entirely predictable. We don't always have time in the field to

RIGHT: ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES

While I am usually drawn to individual features within a landscape, this capture could be considered as a collection of several. In fact, I did locate a photogenic section of rounded rocks juxtaposed with a larger slab of stone, and I did make an image of the driftwood collection only, but I believe this print tells a more relatable story. There are angular rocks, smooth rocks, wave tossed pieces of driftwood and even the architect of all of this sculptural work – the ocean. Could I have overlooked one or more of these elements and produced an acceptable print? Possibly – but would a tighter crop express a narrative that aligned with my experience in the moment?





THE PUSH

I was originally attracted to the tannin foam floating past on this river, but in the process of trying to identify a narrative that would fill my almost square frame, I began to look further afield. This section of flood debris added, I think, to the dynamic qualities of the setting, so I chose to locate a major element right on the frame edge, as if the print border was an obstacle in itself. Sure, that decision could have been made as a crop at the printing (or editing) stage, but by doing it 'in-camera' there is a much better chance of having the other contributing elements form a strategic part of the composition.

fully interrogate our proposed image and it could be that our interpretation further evolves when we consider the capture as a print once we are isolated from the environment in which it was made.

Aesthetic Errors

In many cases, however, I have found the reverse to be true as well. Those visual choices we make while in the landscape are influenced and fabricated by that environment and it has been my experience that our initial choices are often the more meaningful and therefore truer to our engagement with the subject.

We may recognise certain aesthetic 'errors' in hindsight, but I wonder whether cropping to rectify what was part of our holistic participation also devalues our individual perception and by extension removes a piece of us as the creator?

For example, a first-time visitor to Uluru may be so overwhelmed by the physical presence of this geological



THE FIGUREHEAD

I made two images of this particular subject – this one and a vertical capture from a viewpoint to the side (which was actually a more balanced capture in my opinion). I thought the visual elements worked well together in the other version, but despite their compositional precision (or perhaps because of it), they seemed almost artificial and to lack a purpose for their being. This crop, if it can be called that, was actually done in-camera at the shooting stage while I was assessing the subject for possibilities. Yes, I took the more visually acceptable version to ease any sense of regret later, but much prefer this more disorderly composition for its ambiguity and implicit authenticity.

landmark that they locate the subject smack bang in the centre of their viewfinder.

At the time, the impression of dominance and apparent lack of other contributing features may well have contributed to a concept that was instinctively driven, rather than one that was aesthetically considered. However, I don't believe that such a photograph born of lived experience should be automatically rejected at the processing stage because it violates a conventional set of rules. Should we seriously attempt to crop such an image into a more visually palatable form with only the rule of thirds to guide us?

Well okay, Uluru may be an exception to the 'typical' landscape, but I believe a similar sentiment applies more often than we may realise. Our individual assessments of landscape don't necessarily revolve purely around an aesthetic hierarchy that places visual clarity at the pinnacle of our photographic intentions. In the real world, we often try to weave our observations, our emotions and our understanding into the image as well. The capture is typically a mix of subject, light and individual human creativity.

Critically Analyse

I think there is a strong case to be made for making our primary cropping decisions in-camera while we are in the field. Sure, there are advantages in doing so simply in terms of pixel retention, but the primary driver will be found in how we can more fully interpret the landscape when we approach it decisively, as if we are making a 'one-off' Polaroid capture. The need to critically analyse all aspects of the subject or scene brings even more clarity to our vision if we expect not to revisit the composition.

We will be more likely to assign visual value to every element of the picture and by doing so, include all that is necessary for our narrative, but no more.



INTO THE DEEP

I showed this print to a couple of photography mates who immediately advised me that the far right edge of the image should be cropped back in the interests of visual simplicity, leaving only the tree trunk visible. Now I could make all sorts of counterclaims here about a reduction in implied depth, an unhelpful shift in the highlight balance and losing a sense of the tree as a unique entity, but in the final analysis, perhaps little would change in the image. However, there is immense benefit to our photographic progress in receiving impartial opinion. I think it is very important to get input from others, not necessarily just to alter our images, but primarily for us to be able to justify our own decisions.

Cropping remains one of the most frequently used mechanisms for compositional improvement in landscape photography, largely because alternative viewpoints and broader perspectives are retrospectively impractical in most cases. Without doubt it is the possibilities of cropping suggested by others or recognised by ourselves, that over time opens our minds to a more concise (but still individual) way of seeing.

We may not always recognise the power that selectivity brings to a photograph when we are in the field bombarded by multiple visual influences, but it is that ongoing desire to see with more clarity that ultimately provides direction to our aesthetic vision.

I regularly offer my landscape captures to other photographers for assessment, not because I hope to receive endorsement or praise, but because I genuinely wish to consider alternative views.

Suggestions from others to crop an image can be quite polarising, even incomprehensible to the maker, but in a strange way can encourage us to place a value (and reason) on our decision making and may strengthen our resolve.

On the other hand, external feedback that encourages us to look more broadly at our vision is a very useful stimulus for we who live behind a viewfinder, often with only ourselves to serve as creator, consumer and critic.

SLOW SHUTTER SPEED PANNING ON THE ROAD

While there's a huge interest in intentional camera movement, Jackie Ranken asks if we have forgotten the fine art of slow shutter speed panning and the creative opportunities it provides for travel photography.

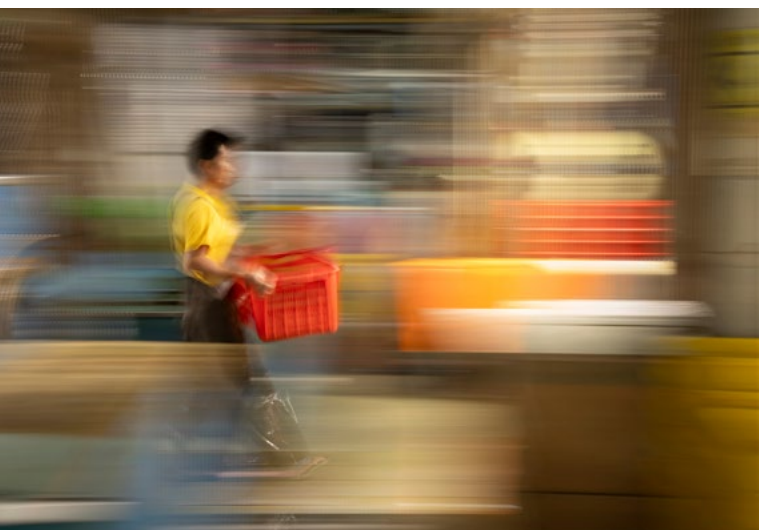
Panning is a form of intentional camera movement (ICM) where the camera follows a moving subject at the same pace as the subject hopefully capturing an interesting part of it with relative sharpness while the background blurs with expressive motion.

Panning is used extensively in sport photography when the photographer needs to follow the action and very fast shutter speeds are generally used to capture these sharp,

decisive moments. In this article though, my focus is on travel photography and making photographs with a unique and expressive painterly quality.

How Fast? How Slow?

Finding the right shutter speed to capture expressive movement takes practice, but a good place to start is around 1/15 second. Slower shutter speeds tend to create more abstract images,

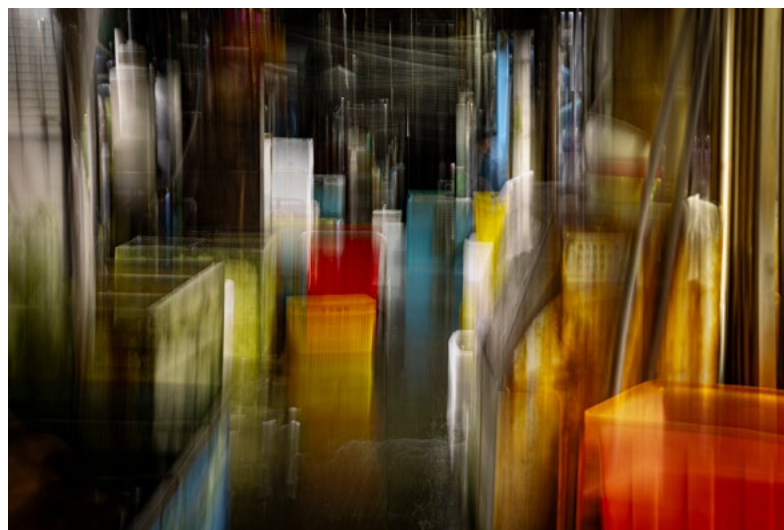


Hong Kong Fish Market

f8, 1/3 second, ISO 640, Canon EOS R5 MKII

Above left: Study this example where a worker in a Hong Kong Fish Market is moving through the scene. Examine the motion carefully. Predominantly, there is a gliding movement from left to right, accompanied by a slight up-and-down rhythm created by the worker's footsteps. The sharpest parts of the image are the man's face, his shirt sleeve and the crate he is carrying. Fortunately, I had several opportunities to refine my panning before the worker moved on to his next job.

Above right: Compare the difference the panning direction makes, this one taken with an upward movement in the same room without a moving subject. This is intentional camera movement (ICM). The room has become an abstract landscape. The only sharp areas are where the movement of the camera follows the edge of a doorway or the corner of a crate that is aligned with the movement of the camera. Both images have their own virtues. Which one presses your button?





Rickshaw in Kyoto, Japan

f5, 1/6 second, ISO 800 with a 6-stop neutral density filter attached.. Canon EOS R5MKII, focal length 24mm

This image was made just after we had been dropped off at our accommodation in Kyoto. Fortunately, I had my camera out and ready to shoot on AV Mode, with a neutral density filter already attached. I was ready to capture the rickshaw driver as he navigated the narrow street with a slow shutter speed. The sharpest parts of the image are the rug and the shiny wheel hub and then our eye naturally goes to the driver and the passengers. The movement tells the story of the rickshaw driver as he balances the rig and looks back for traffic. Because the subject is close to the camera, the movement in the background begins to take on a cylindrical appearance as it mimics my circular movement of the camera.

which are my favourite, while faster shutter speeds retain more detail. As always, it depends on your intention and what you want the photograph to communicate.

I like my photographs to be expressive and almost so abstract that a viewer has to pause to work out what they are seeing.

One of the best places to practise is somewhere that similar subjects repeatedly move past your viewpoint. This allows you to refine your technique over the course of the session.

I generally shoot in a semi-manual exposure mode, called AV (where I set the aperture and allow the camera to select the shutter speed). This may sound counter-intuitive, but I know that if I change my aperture from, say, f5.6 to f11, the opening in the lens becomes two stops smaller. The camera then automatically slows the shutter speed to maintain the same exposure. In addition, the overriding brightness is controlled by the exposure compensation setting. That's the + for lighter and – for darker exposure.

I choose an aperture and ISO to suit the brightness of the situation, make a test shot, review it and then I can quickly experiment with different shutter speeds with a simple flick of one dial, instead of two dials or controls that would be required with full manual exposure control. I'm experimenting to find what shutter speed suits the subject and the situation. Once

I find this and then want exposure consistency, I can always change to full manual exposure mode.

Neutral Density

To get a slow shutter speed you will often need to be shooting in a low-light situation or have a neutral density filter attached to your lens. (A neutral density filter is a dark piece of glass attached to the front of your lens, reducing the amount of light that reaches the sensor.)

Exposure is then balanced by adjusting the ISO and aperture to suit the available light. In the examples here, my ISO varies from 100 to 800, but the most important thing is to get the exposure looking right, noticing what effect the shutter speed is having and responding to that depending on what the situation is.

Some people might choose TV (Time Value) or S which lets you set the shutter speed and allows the camera to change the aperture to suit the exposure. Both techniques work and so it's all about what you get used to and being out there having a go.

Panning Technique

Practising smooth camera movement that matches the speed of the subject is difficult to pull off at any time. I have many more unsuccessful images than I have successes. This is partly because at the instant the shutter is released, I briefly lose sight of the



Subway train, Tashkent

f11, 1/3 second, ISO 800. Canon EOS R5MKII, focal length 50mm

This photograph was made in the underground in Uzbekistan and brings back vivid memories for me - and that is what panning can do. Motion is often connected to the emotion one feels as a train whizzes past in the underground. To my mind, the emotion is far more important than perfect sharpness. This image could have been made in many subway systems around the world as residents head home after work. My eye goes straight to the man in the white shirt, framed within the train window.

subject. So I imagine where the motion is going and move my body and camera appropriately, hoping for the best.

Essentially, you position your subject within the viewfinder frame and move the camera to track the subject. So as the subject moves in reality, you also move the camera to keep its



Venice in the Rain, Italy

f16, 0.6 second, ISO 200, Canon EOS R5, 24mm focal length

The light was soft and mellow and the movement of the woman as she descended the stairs takes me back to being there. Rain changes the mood of a city. The reflections, umbrellas and soft light all become part of the story and Venice seems to slow down just enough for this kind of photograph.

position within the viewfinder as static as possible – usually it's in the middle, but it doesn't have to be. During the exposure, the subject doesn't move much relative to the camera, so it appears sharp, but the background is stationary as the camera moves and so it ends up as a blur.

Another option is to look over the lens instead of through it. First make sure that the focus mode is set to automatic or AI Servo with Canon. Or pre-focus on the spot where the action is going to pass through and set your focus mode to manual.

Ideally, the light falling on the subject should be interesting, the background not distracting and the subject should have one dominant direction of movement. Subjects that move in multiple directions up and down as well as sideways can become confusing, unless confusion is part of your intention. There are no right or wrong outcomes, only photographs that you later edit and decide are your keepers.

Distractions are one of the biggest challenges in panning. If you want to strengthen your communication, pay attention to what else is happening within the frame and simplify where possible, while remaining mindful of the rules and ethics surrounding where and how your work will be shown.

One final thought. Don't become too focused on making a technically perfect panning photograph. If every part of the subject is tack sharp, you've probably lost some of the magic. Motion is what makes panning unique. It reminds us what it



Rickshaw in Takayama, Japan.

f5, 3.2 seconds, ISO 320, with a 6-stop neutral density filter attached. Canon EOS R5MKII, focal length 24mm

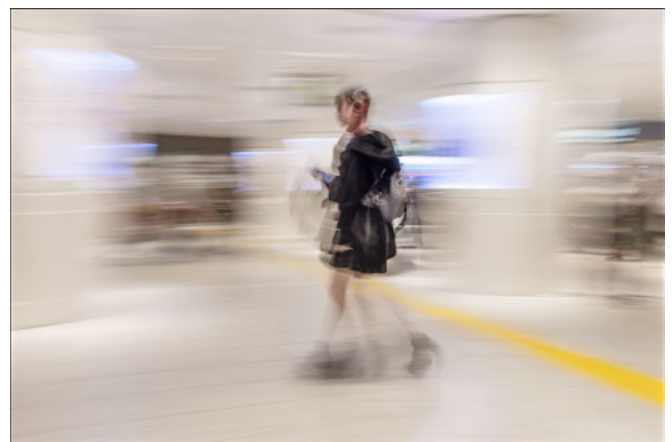
This second rickshaw photograph is much more abstract. It was a bit of a grab shot as the rickshaw passed me on a street in Takayama. I accidentally had my exposure compensation set to +2EV, so my shutter speed went to 3.2 seconds. I kept the camera following the motion and this is what it captured. (The raw image was quite light, but I was able to darken it down when I processed it.) Sometimes our best photographs come from happy accidents, provided we're prepared to recognise them afterwards.

felt like to be there as much as what it looked like. For me, that's what photography is really about, it's making photographs that help us remember the experience rather than simply recording what we saw.

Tips for Better Panning

- Start with a shutter speed of 1/15 second and experiment from there.
- For more abstract results, try 1/4 second, 1/2 second or even slower.
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and rotate from your hips rather than moving your arms alone.
- Begin by following the subject before pressing the shutter and continue the movement after the exposure is made. This smooth follow-through often improves the result.
- Use continuous autofocus, particularly when photographing fast-moving subjects.
- Practise on cyclists, joggers, cars, trains or birds flying past at a predictable distance.
- Be prepared for a low success rate. One successful image from twenty or thirty attempts is not uncommon.
- Most importantly, think about what the movement says about the subject. Panning is not simply a technique; it is a way of expressing energy, rhythm and atmosphere.

I think panning is a wonderful technique to practise while travelling because the subject matter is often more exotic and you have time to play. Remember, first and foremost, you are making photographs to please yourself.



Tokyo Station

f8, 0.3 second, ISO 100, Canon EOS R5, focal length 24mm

Tokyo Station is one of my favourite people panning places. I usually hold the camera at waist level with the strap around my neck for stability. This keeps the camera steady and is also less noticeable. Because people are constantly flowing through this space, you have plenty of opportunities to experiment with different shutter speeds and camera movements.

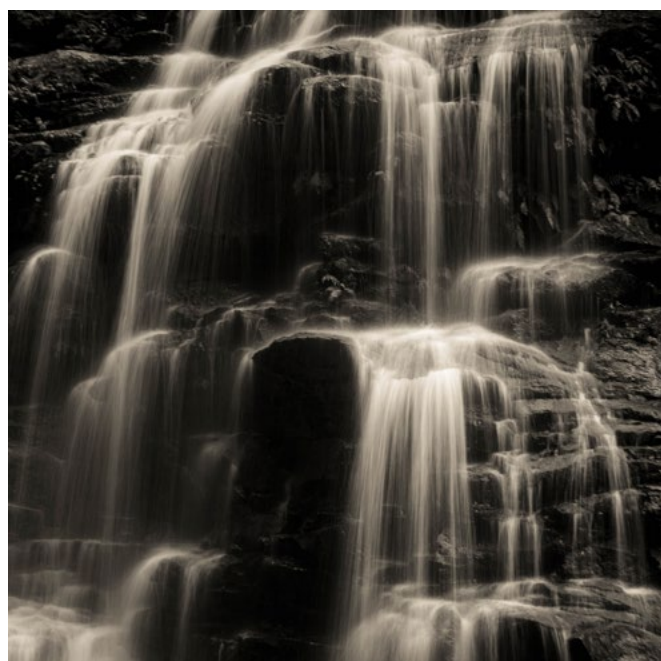
A COUPLE OF BOOKS

Actually, Len Metcalf can't count, but his suggestions for reading are very worthwhile!

See what you think about these tomes.

Some books I love and recommend. I have a ferocious appetite for reading. Art and photography books in particular. I have about two thousand books at the moment, with more than three-quarters of them about photography and art. Whilst a few hundred are technically based, most are pictorial collections of beautiful images. I get lost in them for days. There are a lot I still haven't read or contemplated enough – yet.

I really struggled with reading as a child. It was a product of dyslexia and learning disabilities and a period of ear infections and deafness, combined with time out of school and being placed back into various different school years, trying to find my



best fit. A round peg in a square hole, no doubt. Unfortunately, the English side was always behind, while the rest was always ahead. My sister Robbie, a school teacher, suggested they get me a book on camping. It was the first book I read cover to cover repeatedly. Later in my childhood, they started taking me to the local library weekly. And I'd come home with a pile of books to study and read each week. I think that is when I really became a bibliophile.

My first collection, my first intentional library was really an educational one, with specialities in the outdoors and environmentalism. I eventually donated it to TAFE NSW and it is at Wentworth Falls, for the outdoor recreation department mainly. A thirst for information and visual stimulation no doubt. I was also able to build a library on vocational education for the Kuwait Ministry of Defence in another life.

Anyway, I thought many of you would be interested to hear what books I would recommend you read to round out your knowledge and aesthetic tastes in photography and art. I am thinking I will continue this article in future issues and explore some of the incredible monographs of photographs I can recommend.

On Being a Photographer: A Practical Guide

By David Hurn and Bill Jay, LensWork Publishing, 1997

This book has a lovely conversational style, where two working photographers sit down and discuss in great depth and detail their working practices. When I first read this book, I took so much from it and I found myself reading it over and over again to get down to the nitty gritty of how to photograph.

My favourite memory from this discussion is how more often than not, the first or last photograph you take in a series often is the best one. Either you nail it intuitively and despite trying harder, your compositions go downhill and you eventually stop. Or you start and work your way to finding the best answer to



Photographs by Len Metcalf. Inspiration from his bookshelf.

your photographic question as you progress. As a large format photographer at the time, I didn't really understand this, until I shifted to photography where I started taking more images. Now, if I get it right first time, I find I take fewer afterwards and if I am figuring it out, then I wait until I get into the right place before I start taking images.

They suggest that we aren't photographers because we love photography, but because we use photography to explore something else. Your photography is driven by your curiosity about the world. As I say to my students over and over, find something you love and care about and explore that visually and intellectually.

They also argue convincingly that photography is subjective and we are lured into the myth of objectivity. This is a concept I think many of us love to play with. So many love to say that a

picture can never lie, yet in reality, photography is all about lies. It gives us and is laced with opinions.

Whilst this book could be seen as dated, with conversations about film and contact sheets, I personally find the information in it as relevant today as when I first read it.

This book is out of print, but second-hand copies float around all the usual places. There is a chapter available on Lens Work, about selecting a subject, which is definitely worth a read. Read that to see if you like the way it is written and are inspired to read the full book.

The Creative Act: A Way of Being

By Rick Rubin with Neil Strauss, Penguin Press, 2023

I love this book even if it reads like it was ghost written by Neil Strauss, though this is denied. It is so well constructed and



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written. It has his hand all through it. I love the way he writes. The book is full of Rick's ideas and thoughts. Years of professional experience in a creative life. This book I listened to when it first came out.

I loved it and wanted to understand it, so I listened to it a second time and in bits a third time. I would often replay whole chapters trying to get deeper into the points. It reads aloud very well. I suspect much comes from transcriptions.

Rick Rubin is a music producer who became famous as the co-founder of Def Jam Recordings. He has produced music with Johnny Cash (his American recordings which I absolutely love), Red Hot Chili Peppers and Kanye West.

I loved the chapter on Collaboration, as this is a genre of art making that is very close to my own heart. There is definitely magic afoot when multiple artists come together to make something bigger than themselves. We see this most obviously in shows and books with multiple photographers and less so when two photographers come together to make a single artwork or series. My favourite notable example is Gilbert and George with their irreverent hysterical photographic sculptures. Bernd and Hilla Becher, Pierre et Gilles (Pierre Commy and Gilles Blanchard) are other creative collaborative couples.

Rick effectively argues that the goal of art isn't perfection, but to share who we are and how we see the world. He tells us to concentrate on making art that reflects who you are and being true to yourself.

I also love how he talks about how competition in art is absolutely absurd.

I do love how he tells us to work on our aesthetic tastes and to deepen them, rather than the usual rhetoric of technique. This is a noble pursuit in my opinion, the development of aesthetics and something worth devoting a lifetime to. That is a good idea for an article, note to self.

This is the book I wish I had written and it felt so in line with my current practice of art making/photography.



Landscape within: insights and inspiration for photographers

David Ward, Argentum 2004

David's book is a masterpiece of thinking about photography in my view. It is another book I wanted to write. I found that throughout the book I was agreeing with what he was saying over and over. And for this reason alone, I found it incredibly uplifting. A moment of self-reflection and you know you are on the right track with where you are going and how you are approaching your trade and art.

You would be right in assuming that this book is more of a philosophical photographic wander through the landscape, than a book full of specific advice. Right down my bush path, thank you very much, David. I had the pleasure of meeting David in the UK at the On Landscape, meeting of the minds, photography conference, where he was one of the hosts. He was a character to say the least.

My favourite section of his book is called 'In Plato's Cave'. It is here he discusses through the perspective of visual philosophers what we see and how we process and perceive the world around us, particularly as it relates to photography.

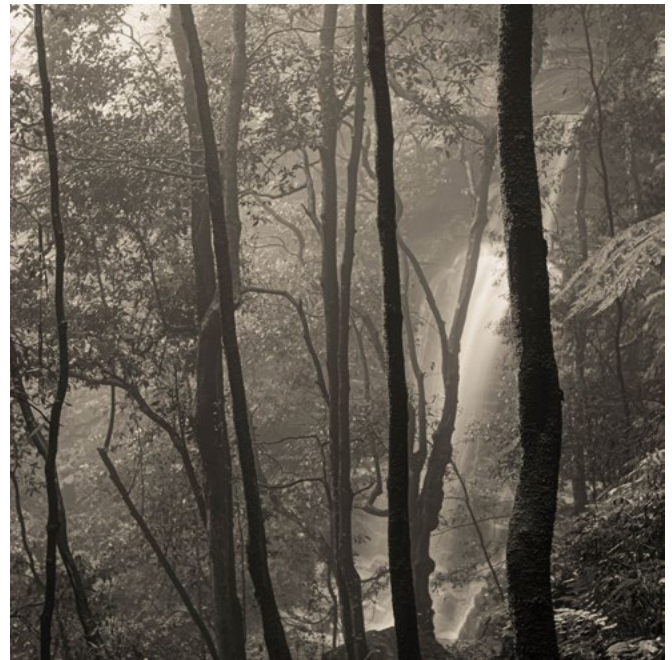
Out of all of the books here, this and "On Photography" are the most read and obviously read, over and over. This book is out of print and hard to find.

Art and Fear: Observations On The Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking

David Bayles and Ted Orland Capra Press, 1994

Yet again another incredible book that talks about talent being overrated, yet gives us incredibly practical advice about perseverance and hard work. They tell us not to give up and explore in depth why so many artists do give up. Art, they explain to us, is made by ordinary people, just like you and me. The concept of creative genius is damaging to the art world.

And again they tell us, that perfection is the enemy. They outline what has now become a famous parable in the art world. A ceramics class is divided into two random groups and one



group was graded solely on quantity. The more pots produced by weight was the measure of success. The other group was graded on quality. They were only judged on one pot. One graded, that was as perfect as possible.

The result was that the group who made the most pots made the best pots, while the quality group didn't learn as quickly as they were too concerned with perfection. The moral: make lots of art and let go of perfection and you will get to incredible art quicker.

As an aside, this parable comes from Jerry Uelsmann, who was a Professor of Photography at the University of Florida (and was an incredible photographic artist), who originally did this with his photography class. The perfection group sat around talking about perfection and what makes a great photograph, while the doing group made lots of images. David and Ted changed the story to ceramics as they were both photographers and they wanted their book to have a wider audience.

Another interesting idea that is useful for photographic artists is your vision should always be ahead of your ability to create what you want. This forces us to push harder and make better art, always pushing our skills ahead of us. Considering how many of us are always pushing our technique, I think this will make so much sense to us.

This book is always on my must read list for aspiring photographers who wish to devote a lifetime towards making creative art. For me, this book helps me understand the creative process and in particular the emotional side of art making, for too often we double down in fear and lose our focus. This book offers us a way around that fear.

The Art of Photography: An Approach to Personal Expression

Bruce Barnbaum, Rocky Nook, 1994

I have been scouring and gleaning gems of wisdom from Bruce's writing since I first purchased a copy of his PDF version of this book well before it was published in printed form. It has grown and been refined and now in its second and expanded

edition. My first lesson from Bruce was called Camera Cuddle. Sit with your camera in your favourite chair and practise setting up and using your camera over and over until you can do it without thinking. This was particularly important when using a view camera as there were so many things to adjust and set. Making sure all the various knobs were tight certainly became methodical. I still get students to do this exercise. Practise using your camera, without trying to take good photographs.

I can't actually find this exercise in the current edition of this book. That is how much this book has changed from its humble beginnings. I wouldn't be surprised to hear it probably started as notes for his students that attended his workshops.

Bruce spends a lot of time discussing composition as a visual language, rather than as a set of rules to be followed. This in the long run is a much better way to learn and understand composition. I particularly enjoy exploring his ideas on creativity and myth busting. The book does provide a fair bit of information about film, most of which isn't so important to the modern digital photographer. This is approximately a third of the book.

If you want something more about the esoteric side of photography, you may find his follow up book, 'The Essence of Photography: Seeing and Creativity', 'Rocky Nook 2013' a better fit. Though I thoroughly recommend you spend your time wandering through both. They are not light reads, but well worth the time spent on studying them.

Art Work: On the Creative Life

Sally Mann, Particular Books and imprint of Penguin Books, 2025

'Art Work' is the most recent book on "how to get shit done", as Sally starts the book. I loved it for the stories and the advice. Sally met Ted Orland at an Ansel Adams workshop and the book is littered with the correspondence between the two over a lifetime of art making. This adds a particular relevance as I am already a Ted fan with 'Art and Fear' (as described previously). It is through these letters and titbits that I glean a deeper understanding of how his book came about.



Photographs by Len Metcalf. Inspiration from his bookshelf.

I have a beautiful fascination with Sally's work and I must return to finish her autobiography 'Hold Still'. I am deeply saddened by her beratement of her work 'Family', something that continues and threatens this body of work still today. Sally was criticised for photographing her children. They are the most beautiful and tender artworks.

I particularly liked seeing the earlier versions of 'Candy Cigarette', showing how she works with an idea to find a meaningful and emotional solution to the idea. She says, '... and then the right keys were struck and the miraculous right time: M-O-B-Y-D-I-C-K.' Seeing this incredible artist share her inner workings is so incredibly illuminating.

Another familiar story, amongst all of these books, is the discussion about talent. For her it is sheer determination and experimentation, with a bit of luck thrown in. Basically, passion and perseverance maketh the artist, not some magical gift bestowed on them at birth.

Lastly, I want to mention one of her chapters about 'Your Darlings'. Those favourite works of art that you are so inextricably drawn to, yet so often they may be killed off. Or in her case killed off by others when she is outright censored. A darling often surfaces and it may take many years for it to get a friend and sometimes it stands alone.

Sally points out how our tastes change, how what we once thought was great, fades into obscurity and we all seem to question what we were thinking when we first put that work out to the public. Our darlings change over time too.

I loved this book and can't recommend it enough, though the actual photographic advice for artists is a little thin, in comparison to the incredible stories that intersperses them. Each story is advice in itself.

The Nature of Photographs: A Primer

By Stephen Shore, Phaeton, 2007

The Stephen Shore book grew out of a course he taught at Bard College on photography. I am sure I refer to this book in every talk about photography I give, because it clearly and



concisely describes the nature of a photograph. It really helped me understand what a photograph is. How it works. And importantly, how it deceives. He talks about how a photograph works on a mental level too.

Let's start with a photograph being, traditionally, on a piece of rectangular paper that is almost two-dimensional, but it does have a thickness and surface qualities. It has a limited contrast range and is usually framed on four sides by the edge of the picture. It is flat and static, it doesn't move. Traditionally, it's something you held in your hand and admired. It is limited in time and often is viewed without any other information, other than the images around it or presented with it. He goes on to remind us that photography is a monocular vision of the world, as opposed to our usual binocular vision. This is very unique to the photographic medium.

Stephen is convinced that a photograph is inherently an analytical art, as we start with the messiness of the real world and we select a picture from it. We impose our order by framing and composition. He tells us that a photograph is only an illusion of the world, a frame through which we might view the world.

This is an incredibly easy and quick book to read. It is beautifully illustrated with so many interesting photographs from many great photographers. Whilst it is a quick book to read, the concepts might take a while to gel and I urge you to sit on each of them. Try to understand the deeper meanings in the text.

Out of all the books I have discussed here, this is the one book you all need to read. However, if you expect to come out the other end of it taking better photographs, you will be surely disappointed. Instead, you will come out the other side understanding the nature of photography better.

Len Metcalf has been writing for Better Photography for over a decade now and has been teaching photography and running Len's School for two decades. Len has a wide selection of online courses too, if you can't make it to one of his location workshops or tours: <http://lenmetcalf.com>

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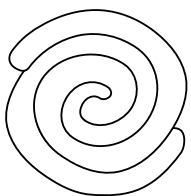
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