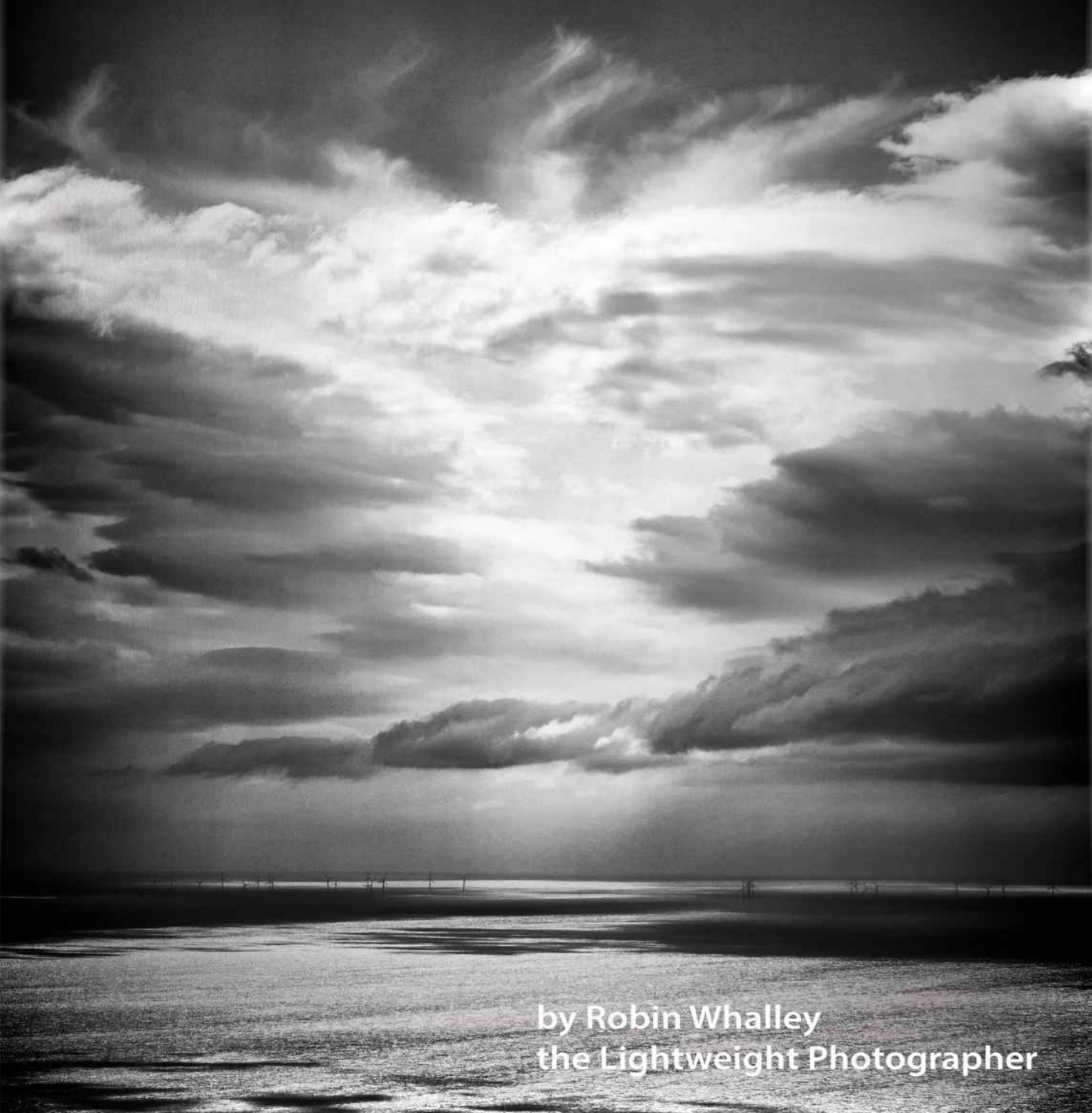


# The Photographer's Coach

Helping you achieve success in your photography



by Robin Whalley  
the Lightweight Photographer

# The Photographers Coach:

Helping you achieve success in your photography

By Robin Whalley  
(The Lightweight Photographer)

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*To my mother who passed away during the writing of this book.*

*Gone but always remembered.*

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This book was developed exclusively for Kindle devices and does not support page numbering .

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## Introduction – Be sure to read this

It's very important that you understand what this book is and what is expected of you before you invest time and money reading it.

Firstly I am a Landscape Photographer so the examples of work in this book are drawn from my own back catalogue. Despite this, the framework and exercises discussed will apply to all forms of photography. I will warn you though, don't expect to find information here relating to different types of photography. You won't find tips and advice about how to shoot portraits, macro or work with flash. This isn't your standard photography "how to" book.

There are some photographers who want to read about photography and how to achieve a certain result. They want step-by-step instructions and their photography becomes a little like "painting by numbers". There is nothing wrong with this because some people like to learn in this way. Indeed, many of the books available today (especially in the Kindle market) adopt this approach. This book is very different; it is more like a workbook that will encourage you to think and explore photography for yourself through carefully-constructed exercises. It also presents a simple but effective framework that will help you progress beyond the exercises presented if you so desire.

I have to say that I thought more than twice before deciding to publish this book. It has been on my hard drive for over a year now but I have resisted the temptation to publish. This is mainly down to me worrying about the expectations people have about my books. Most people read my books because they want to learn a new skill, perhaps learning the details of a software package so that they can improve their photography. They want to understand the steps necessary and might not appreciate a book that raises lots of questions and requires a lot of self-searching. What changed my mind is having read some of the poor quality books (that tend to be published on Kindle) claiming to turn the reader into a Professional Photographer by following a few basics of photography. This is utter rubbish, as you will read in a moment. What this book will do is provide you with the tools and coaching necessary to set yourself on the path to creating good, perhaps great, photography (depending on how hard you want to work).

This book is quite different from other photography books and I suspect it will be unlike any you have ever read. It describes a framework I developed and have been using in my own work for a number of years. This framework grew into a presentation that I have been sharing with camera clubs and societies in the UK for some time, with much favourable comment. But it takes a very different approach to teaching photography in that it helps you teach yourself.

The best analogy to this book that I can provide is that of a personal coach. A coach is someone who challenges you to improve in your chosen field. A good coach will present you with exercises to help you master key skills and then challenge you to develop further. This book takes the approach of the coach and provides a framework for you to use in order to improve and develop yourself. (I only wish I could be sitting with you whilst you read it). If you read, study and follow the exercises in this book you will improve your

photography, perhaps quite dramatically. I can't quantify how much you will improve because every reader will be starting from a different point. I also don't know how diligently you will apply the lessons from its pages. What I can say with certainty, though, is that you will improve.

To gain the most from this book you will need to read it at least twice and think about the content. You will need to follow the exercises on a regular basis as well as develop further exercises that you are able to identify by applying the information presented. All this should become a regular activity in your work to improve your photography and you should ideally return to the book every three months, at least until you have reached a level of skill beyond what is covered .

Recently, there has been literature published about the 10,000-hour rule. This says that if you want to become really good at something, perhaps world-class, the critical thing is not talent but practice. It takes around 10,000 hours (about 10 years) of practice to reach that level. But this isn't just any practice; it needs to be high quality practice. If you want to become a professional or world-class photographer, it's no good just going out with a camera to take pictures. You will not improve with even 100,000 hours of just pointing a camera and pressing the shutter release. No, you need to be much more structured in your approach: shoot, evaluate the results, study the great photographers, experiment and learn from your experiments. You need to have an open mind to new tools and concepts then look to include these in your work. Becoming a great photographer takes dedication and hard work.

### **Trademarks**

At times during this book I may have mentioned companies and their products. Many of these names will be trademarks and copyrighted. All such registered trademarks are recognised and used purely in an editorial sense . There is no intended breach of trademark or copyright.

### **Disclaimer**

Whilst I have made every effort to ensure the information in this guide is accurate, up to date and factual, it represents my views and approach. Some may disagree with the information I present but to the best of my knowledge there are no omissions or errors. If you find something you believe needs to be corrected, please contact me by email using [robin@lenscraft.co.uk](mailto:robin@lenscraft.co.uk). I will then be able to correct this for future versions of the book.

Thanks purchasing and I hope you enjoy the book.







## The Journey Begins

You *have* read the introduction, haven't you? Please don't skip it because it's important. Take a moment to go back and read it now if you haven't already. It's important that your expectations about this book are correct or you might not benefit.

The framework in this book will guide you on your journey to achieving success as a photographer. To make it to the end of this journey you will need a final destination but also some interim destinations that you would like to visit along the way. Once you embark on this journey and begin reaching your destinations it's likely that you'll think of new 'places' you'd like to visit along the way. Don't fight this but enjoy it as part of the journey. In reality, you will never quite feel you are a successful photographer because the better you become the more faults you will find with your work.

What I am trying to say by using the metaphor of a journey is that you need to decide where you want to go as a photographer. The approach set out in this book is going to help you get there .

## Set Yourself a Goal

Now, in case you haven't already realised it, you will never be satisfied that you are a great photographer. The more you know, the more you will realise that you don't know. The better you become, the more weaknesses you will see in your own work. Take heart though, this is simply part of the process of your personal development. But if you read this and find yourself saying, "that doesn't apply to me", then you haven't yet started your journey to being world class.

So what do you want to achieve with your photography? Do you want to turn pro and make a living from it? Do you want to win competitions? Be recognised by others as being great? Produce work that you are proud to share with others? Do you actually know and can you articulate what it is that you are working towards? If you can't, you need to invest some time bringing this into focus.

Before you set out on your journey, it can be instructive to look at the journeys of other fellow travellers. One very helpful way to do this is by studying the careers of others you admire and who have achieved success. What you find will most likely surprise you. Often, people will work for many years in virtual obscurity before they get a "lucky break". What you need to remember when studying the careers of others is the 10,000-hour rule mentioned in the introduction. The apparent start of their career, that lucky break, is likely to be after approximately 10,000 hours of patient, quality practice. We see this time and time again in all sorts of disciplines. If you want to know more, read "[The Talent Code](#)" by Daniel Coyle.



## Exercises to Define your Goals

1. Take 15 minutes out of your day and shut yourself away. Make yourself comfortable and clear your mind. Now begin to jot down all the goals you might possibly have for your photography in the future. Let your imagination run wild and nothing is out of bounds. Jot down everything that you can think of. At the end of the 15 minutes (you can spend more, but not less), put your notebook away for a couple of days.

2. Before moving on to the next stage ensure that a couple of days have passed since you completed the first exercise. Go back to your notes and review what you wrote. Cross off anything that doesn't really appeal to you, as well as making the remaining goals stronger. Once you are happy, take some time to arrange your goals in some form of chronological order based on when you would like to achieve them. Don't worry about trying to work out *how* to achieve them, concentrate on understanding *what* you want to achieve. When you start to work with the framework you can use these goals in order to guide your thinking about the areas you need to develop. As you develop your skills and work towards your end goal, you will find new goals and opportunities present themselves.

3. Select three well-known photographers whose work you admire. Use Google (or your search engine of choice) to research them as thoroughly as possible. Don't just look at the easy-to-find information; try to get under the skin of each photographer, to understand the people and the problems they had to overcome during their careers . How long was it before they became recognised and what did their path to success look like? Can you identify some of the minor goals and achievements along their journey? What work are they best known for and do you agree it's their best work? Keep in mind that we don't all follow the same path on our journey, nor are we all travelling to the same destination. What worked for someone else won't necessarily work for you. You are carrying out this research purely to understand the work, effort and perseverance the most "talented" photographers put into their "instant" success. You are not trying to copy their journey.

## A Word of Caution

At this point we need to take a short detour on to what you might call the photography highway travelled by many on their photography journey. There is nothing wrong with this highway except that it might not be heading where you want it to go. It's quite possible that it might take you off course, making you think that you want to go somewhere that you don't. More importantly, travelling this highway may actually take you longer to reach your desired destination.

What I am calling the photography highway is the route most people who start in photography seem to follow. This is such a popular route that it has almost become a traffic jam of people jostling with each other in an effort to reach the same goal. It's this traffic jam that slows you down and prevents you from enjoying the journey.

The usual approach taken by many of those "getting into" and "becoming serious" about photography looks something like this:

1. You purchase your first SLR camera and lens.
2. You buy some photography magazines and books and start to read everything you can in order to master the camera. It appears quite tricky and complicated but you know that once you have mastered the controls you will be able to shoot great images.
3. Your initial attempts don't render many images that you are happy with and you realise "you need more equipment". You buy more lenses and possibly some of those new accessories that are "vital to being a better photographer."
4. Your photography slowly begins to improve and you begin to show it to friends and family, who remark on how good your work is. They begin telling you that you are very talented and could earn your living from this. You like the sound of this and suddenly begin to dream about making this your chosen career. It has to be better than working in [insert your current career here] .
5. You read more books and magazines, possibly attending a course or two as well. This opens your eyes to others who are also on their own journey. It might also make you decide that you don't have all the equipment you need or perhaps even the right equipment. Hmm, time to reach for your wallet or purse.
6. By now you are also sharing your work on the Internet where lots of people tell you that it's amazing and follow this by adding "can you look at and comment on my work as yours is so good."
7. By now you will have identified your favourite pro photographer or photographers and will have investigated what equipment they are using. Seeing their results, you will probably decide you need to invest in similar equipment. After all, if it produces such good results for them it will surely improve your photography.
8. The technical quality of your images will have improved and some of your

shots are good. People who aren't already accomplished photographers will tell you that they are great. Despite this, you are still not making much headway with your new career dream.

9. It's possible by now that some will have given up on their journey. Others, though, will have thrown themselves into the task of setting up a photography business full time. Some will achieve a level of success after a struggle, whilst others will give up in frustration and return to having a "real career."

The message I am trying to drive home here is that most people who like photography will think at some time that it's a great career to pursue. But making a success of photography as a career is about having business acumen and skills as much as being a good photographer. The world does not care about how great a photographer you are, only that you can take the necessary shot, to the right quality and do it on demand. Being a good pro is about being able to produce that shot, on demand, no matter what.

If you want to get good at photography, and I mean really good, following the steps outlined above will not help you achieve it. Yet this is the process and journey that many people fall into. It's a trap that can ruin a great hobby. Don't go there until you can pass the 10,000-hour test.



## Sharing My Journey

I would now like to share with you my journey in order to help you make sense of all these words.

Below you can see my first “successful” image. I shot this in Iceland some years back, before the area became a magnet for photographers. The image was captured using a Pentax 67 medium format camera with Fuji Velvia slide film , about two years after I started taking photographs. I suspect some of you reading this will never have used slide film and will be blissfully unaware of just how tricky it could be to capture a good exposure. This image was quite a landmark achievement for me at the time.



Your definition of successful may not be the same as mine and in fact you may not like this image. I am judging it to be successful because I remain happy with the image today (and it has been published commercially) .

The astute amongst you, or those who have been photographing long enough to know about medium format film photography, will realise that this was a very expensive camera for someone who had taken up photography only a couple of years earlier. Well spotted.

I had been bitten by the photography bug and been duped into thinking that I needed the best equipment, just like my favourite pro photographer at the time. I had also read in photography books and magazines (so it must be true) that if I was serious about landscape photography that I needed to be using medium format equipment.

I should point out that a variation of this thinking still exists today. There are many landscape photographers who use large format equipment and couldn't possibly use anything less. There is then another group of DSLR users who shoot full frame and say you can't shoot landscapes successfully with anything less. Don't be fooled: it's the image that matters and not the equipment. Use what's best for you and don't ridicule others because they have made different choices. Judge the work, not the equipment.

Let's roll on a few years now to look at another image.





This image is possibly the next I consider successful and was taken a few years after the Iceland picture. At this point I had decided I needed to go digital because that would help me develop as a photographer because I could gain instant feedback. As I recall now, this was one of my first really sensible decisions and a deliberate attempt to improve my picture-taking skills.

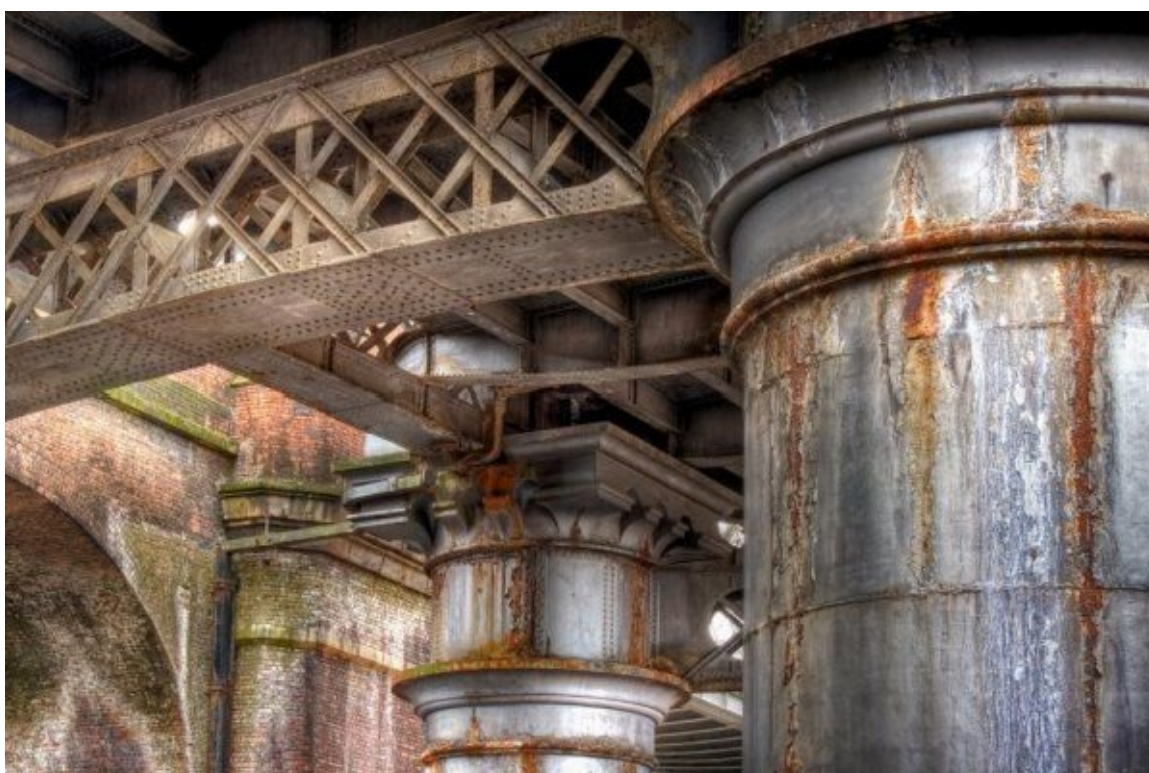
This particular image was captured on a 6MP Canon DSLR and prints very nicely at A3+. Although I liked this image, I have to admit that I was still suffering from the delusion that I needed a medium format camera for landscape. So despite producing this image I was also shooting away with my medium format gear, constantly switching between cameras. What a mistake. I should have been concentrating my efforts on creating a great composition and developing my vision for the scene rather than wasting time switching equipment .

What is also interesting about this image is that the original I produced (as part of the *Landscape Photographer of the Year* exhibition) doesn't look like the version above. When I now look at the original image I see quality that I am unhappy with. The colours are poor, the shadows are blocked up, the saturation is too high and there is a yellow colour cast. What you see above is a recent conversion that I made for the purpose of this book. Not only am I much happier with the new image but also it took me a fraction of the time to produce when compared to the original. This improvement is the result of developing myself using the framework presented in this book.

Now let's move on a couple of years and look at another image.



Again, this has been a successful image and one that others seem to like too. At the time it was quite a radical departure from the landscape work I had been previously pursuing. This was also the point in my development where I discovered High Dynamic Range or HDR photography (before it seemed to become very popular). I don't know quite what sparked my interest in HDR but there was something about it that inspired me to experiment. It was also the point where I recognised that I liked to shoot urban scenes as well as traditional landscapes and that I was able to capture good photographs at most locations . Again, this is quite a landmark achievement for a photographer.



Within a few short months I had produced a number of images that I could class as successful, not because they are stunning images but because I was satisfied with the

results. The results seemed to match up to the image I had visualised at the time I took the photograph. I also found that I enjoyed the process of shooting and creating the work. Something had started to work for me and I was riding high on a tide of enthusiasm.



More images followed as I mined this vein of inspiration.



Ultimately, my run of inspiration came to an end with the image above. What ended the run was not my loss of skills or running out of subjects but the end of my inspiration. I had read everything I could about HDR photography, experimented heavily and watched as it had become very popular. At the time I was using Flickr but as the forums filled with over-processed images (in my opinion) my inspiration and vision left me. Unfortunately, I

didn't acknowledge this at the time (even though I recognised something was wrong) and spent a frustrating period wondering why I was neither enjoying my photography nor producing anything I liked.

During this period I was also expending a lot of effort trying to make money from my photography. This caused me to pursue a "commercial style" for my photography rather than follow my vision and I think this also contributed to my loss of vision. Eventually, I decided to follow my instincts and start photographing what I enjoyed in a style that I loved.



The image you see above was one of my first ventures back into landscape photography after my time in the HDR wilderness (only joking, I still enjoy HDR). Yes, this scene (where?) has been shot a million times (by photographers in the UK) but it's one I love. It helped rekindle my enthusiasm and inspiration for "traditional" landscape photography.

By this point I had begun to develop my idea of the photography framework as a means to identify weaknesses and the areas in which I needed to build my skills. As I applied the framework, I identified gaps and started to practice photography with meaningful exercises. This resulted in my performance improving as well as my enjoyment.

Prior to this I had simply set out to shoot and process more images of a wide variety of subjects, thinking that this would make me a better photographer. It was certainly practice in pressing the shutter button and using the basic tools of Photoshop, but I wasn't being creative. I even suspect that I had slowed my progress by trying to make money from photography before I was truly ready.

Moving on a few more years and my practice with the framework had begun to bear fruit. I was now producing many more images that I was pleased with and there was also a consistency to the results where people would also recognise my work.

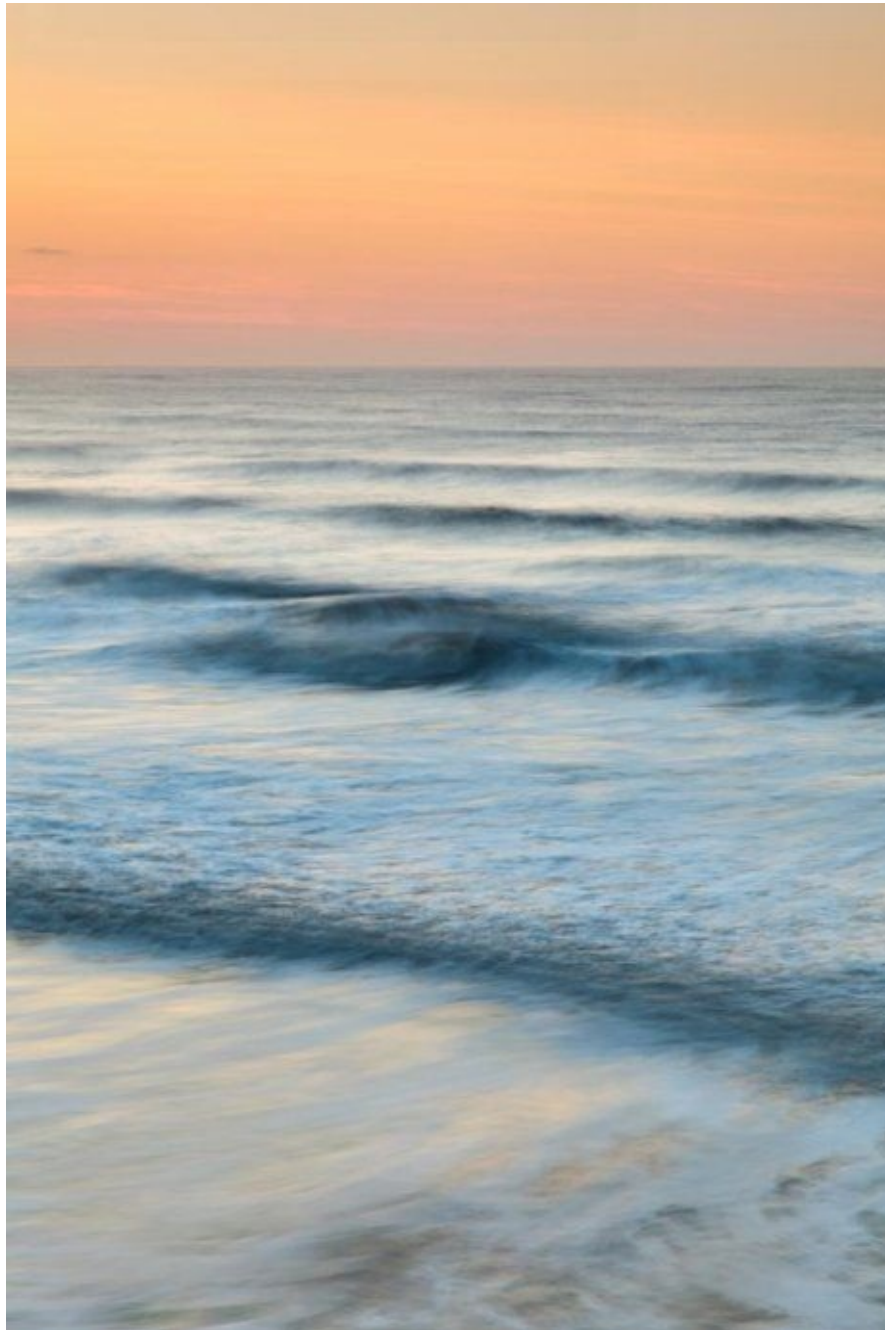
You can see a typical image from this period below, taken during an evening shoot at

Burnham in Somerset.



Whilst the structure is nice and unusual, the image is all about light, reflection and colour. I feel it conveys emotions of peace, tranquillity and calm. These are all positive emotions that I came to realise I want to represent in my landscape work.

Bringing my development more up to date, the following seascape is typical of the scenes I now love to shoot.

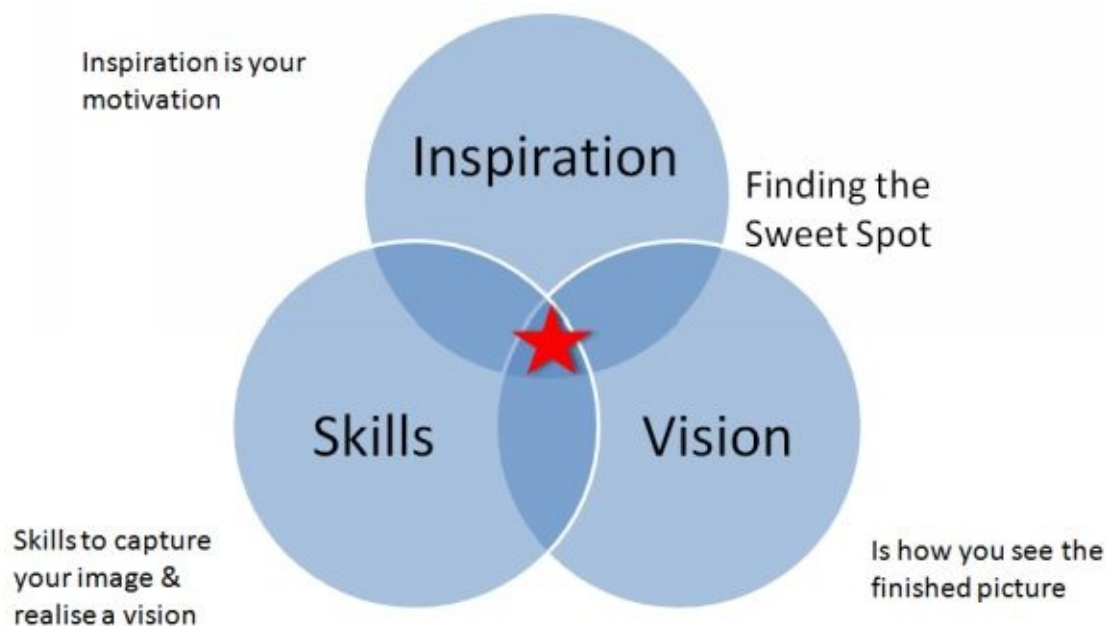


Again, I hope you will feel the positive emotions being conveyed by this image. It isn't packed with drama. It doesn't shock. In fact, many people would overlook it and not give it a second glance. For me, though, it's an image I am pleased with. When I came across the scene I immediately recognised its potential. I knew what the end result was that I wanted to create and I could visualise it at the time of shooting. Not only that, I knew I had the post-processing skills to realise my vision. I was excited by the event and the recognition that I would be producing what is, at least for me, a great image. Being able to have this level of confidence in the end result at the time I released the shutter was the result of the framework I will share with you.



## The Framework Summarised

I realise you are keen to progress and to understand how you can improve your photography, so let's examine the framework and how it can help you .



The rest of this book is based around the framework you see above so it's vital you spend a little time understanding and thinking about it. Whilst it may appear simple at first glance, it can become quite deep as you think about the actual meaning of the words and how they apply to photography. For example, what is Vision? It's quite common for people to have different understandings of commonly-used terms, so I'll give examples in an effort to make things as clear as possible.

The framework above shows that in order to progress as a photographer there are three areas you need to develop. The level of your performance will be determined by one or more of these three areas. But it's not the strongest area that limits you, it's the weakest. It's the weakest area that will show through in your work and will prevent people from connecting with your work . There is little point in just strengthening one or two areas because the weaker area will always bring your overall performance down.

To make this point more clearly, consider the following example. Think of when you first started to take photographs. You probably saw lots of opportunities to capture photographs and snapped away. As you did this, I'm sure you were imagining great results , but when you downloaded the pictures (or had your film developed) you were disappointed. The images just didn't live up to the image you had 'seen' when you took the picture. In terms of the framework, your skills were not sufficient to capture and realise the image you had visualised .

Let's take a closer look at each of these dimensions to understand them better. The three elements are:

1. Inspiration – This is your motivation for why you take photographs and it's personal to you. What motivates you may be influenced by what types of photography inspire you. When two photographers look at the same scene they will



notice different things and consequently produce different photographs. That's because we tend to have different inspirations and so we see different scenes, even though we might be standing in the same location. This is not a bad thing but you need to have strong inspiration so you can share that with others. If your inspiration isn't strong, how can you expect others to feel inspired by your work?

2. Vision – This is the unique way that you see the world. As already mentioned, it's rare for two photographers to produce the same photograph of the same scene unless they are deliberately trying to do so. Not only will different things inspire different people but also each photographer will have their own unique vision of how they want to share their image with the world. This is a complex area, which will unfold further as you think about it in greater depth. For example, you may initially think of sharing your vision through individual images but later think of telling stories through a sequence of images, where each image builds a part of the story being shared. There is a lot to consider in this area but unless you build a strong vision others won't be able to see that in your work. This will prevent them from connecting with and understanding your work.

3. Skills – If you don't have the skills to capture what is in front of your lens in a way that communicates your vision, you will end up a very frustrated photographer. We have all had the experience at some time of taking a picture that we thought would be great, only to find when we look at it later that it was a failure. Even the great landscape photographer Ansel Adams suffered from this. It took him many years before he was able to print his famous "Winter Storm Clearing" image in a way that realised his vision for the image. This is an example of not having the skills to realise our vision. We had the vision at the time we released the shutter but not having the necessary skills to translate that into the image we can see in our heads is preventing us from sharing that vision with others. I'm sure you will be able to think of many occasions where you simply can't seem to produce a finished image that you are happy with. You know the finished image is in the picture but you just can't bring it out. This is because your skills have not yet developed to match your vision.

To improve and realise your true potential you must develop all three of these dimensions simultaneously. The weakest area of the three will become the weak link in your work and become the factor that limits the success of your work. Build all three aspects to a world class standard and you will achieve the sweet spot that makes you a world class photographer. Where most photographers fail is that they concentrate exclusively on the skills dimension. This problem is further amplified by magazines and books that focus on Skills (as well as equipment), probably because it's much easier and sells advertising.

The rest of this book is dedicated to exploring each of these dimensions in greater depth to help you gain the best possible understanding. At the end of each section is a series of exercises to help you develop that particular dimension. But don't stop at working through these exercises just once; you should return to them frequently in the future. You should also take time out to think about the exercises further, as well as developing additional

exercises to deal with the weak point in your work.

Remember, you are the only person who is able to consider your own work and truly understand (if you are honest with yourself) where it is lacking. This will take periods of deep introspection but it will be well worth it. By understanding your failures at this level you will be able to understand which dimension of the framework is lacking and then develop a series of exercises to improve.

This has been a short but very important chapter and should form the basis for how you seek to improve your photography in the future. The key to your improvement is meaningful practice , directed towards achieving your end goal.



## Developing Inspiration

As a photographer, you will no doubt recognise that there are many types of photography, including wedding photography, portraiture, still life, macro, landscape, travel, wildlife, sports, documentary and reportage. It's likely that you will be drawn to some of these much more than others. It's rare to find a photographer who is drawn to all aspects of photography (although they may recognise the skill of others and appreciate their work). Equally, you won't find a photographer who produces great results in all areas.

For example, I am drawn strongly to landscape photography. When I am out in the landscape taking images of nature's beauty, I feel truly fulfilled and "in the zone". Just like an athlete or high performing individual, you can get into that state of peak performance. Time flies and you will zone out from the surroundings; your actions take on a very focussed and deliberate appearance. You will be oblivious to all this and simply think, "I am taking pictures". These are the times when you will produce your best work and enjoy photography the most. You can't force or fake inspiration.

In addition to the different types of photography that might inspire you, there are different scenes that can excite and motivate. The press photographer will become excited by the chance to capture a newsworthy story. The wedding photographer is excited when capturing the fleeting moment of affection between a bride and groom. I'm sure you understand the idea.

As a landscape photographer, for example, not every type of scene will excite me. An image of rubbish dumped in rivers does nothing to inspire me, although I know of individuals who would see this as a fabulous opportunity. What excites me is great light falling on a scene of great natural beauty. Below is an image that is typical of the scenes I like to shoot (although they may not do anything to inspire you).



When I shot this image I felt calm, tranquil and amazed by the light and scene unfolding before me. Later in the day the scene was still the same but the light and sky had changed. I understand that it's not the location but a combination of things that inspire me. A great location in the wrong light or great light with a poor location doesn't inspire me; I need

both elements to come together.

You have to understand what motivates and inspires you then put yourself into positions where you will maximise your chance of these things occurring . If you can control any of these elements then you need to understand how this can be achieved and practice controlling them.

Now a word of warning: you might be a member of a photographic club that has monthly challenges. These can be great fun and a good way to develop your skills. The danger is that the desire to place well in these challenges results in you moving away from your inspiration. Remember, if you don't shoot what inspires you, your images will lack vision and your performance will not be at its best .

## Understanding Inspiration

To help you better appreciate and understand Inspiration, here are some examples of images I have taken , together with notes about why I found the subject inspiring to shoot .



I remember this day vividly. It was winter and I was on the beach waiting for sunset. As I waited a huge black cloud rolled in very quickly. As it approached it blocked out the light, looking like something from a disaster movie - I don't think I have ever seen such an ominous sky. In the centre distance you can see the heavy shower that turned out to be a very painful hailstorm. What I like here is the storm light, the colours it produced and its contrast with the dark clouds. I then used a number of techniques in post-capture editing to emphasise these aspects of the scene (but more about that later).



This is a typical beach sunset scene that I love to shoot. I love the way waves pull back over a shale beach. I also love to include an element of movement in the waves with a slightly longer exposure. But what really makes a scene such as this for me is the wonderful soft light of the setting sun. I have to admit that I shot this scene a few years back and that I would now process it quite differently to give what I think would be an improved final image.



These unusual hills are found at Zabriskie Point in Death Valley National Park, California. Whilst their distinctive shape and texture are beautiful and very appealing, it's really the low setting sun casting warm side lighting and creating long shadows that is the real

attraction. With a higher sun and harsh light, the scene loses a lot of its appeal .



This is Wastwater in the English Lake District on a winter's evening. Whilst the scene is very pretty and the mountains quite dramatic, it's nowhere near as appealing during the daytime. It's the lovely pink/blue light of the setting sun and the mist rising from the water that is special . This is a great learning point as a lot of people shoot it during the day because they are taken in by the beauty of the scenery. But what the camera records is the harsh blue light of the daytime and the contrast of the mountains against the lake. Often such images look quite ugly, although the potential of the scene in the right light is superb . Being able to read, understand and capture the light is a camera skill that you need to develop.



This is Death Valley from Dante's View. Again, it's a very dramatic and impressive location but in the wrong light the image captured by the camera will appear ugly. This image works because of the low sun casting the warm light onto the peaks of the mountain.





Yes, there is humour (although you may disagree) in this scene but there is also a wonderful shaft of light that is showing up the textures and colours of the viaduct wall. This was later emphasised in post-capture editing.

You will probably have gathered from the images above that I gain my inspiration from the lighting in a scene and not the scene itself. I watch for lighting conditions that I find interesting and try to combine this with my subject in a way that I think will suit it. This involves an element of trying to anticipate lighting conditions so that I can position myself in locations where the conditions will work well. I can only really do this because I have a strong understanding of the source of my inspiration and have developed the skill of reading/anticipating light . You may not be interested in landscape photography but there will equally be aspects of photography that inspire you and that you should seek to include in your work.

## Exercises to Develop Inspiration

There are a number of exercises you can use to develop the Inspiration dimension of your photography. Some are exercises you will need to complete regularly whilst you can work others into your shooting process. What follows are examples of exercises you can adopt and adapt to your own needs. Longer term, it's important you take time out to think about how you need to develop your Inspiration and devise exercises to support this.

1. Make a list of all the times you have felt a high level of inspiration and motivation to take photographs. Don't just think about times you have enjoyed taking photographs but look for those rare times when everything seemed to come together and you achieved great results. Now think about each of these occasions, try to pinpoint the source of your inspiration and make notes. Are there any common themes coming through? Repeat the exercise but for times when you have really struggled to become creative. What can you learn from this? Done correctly, these exercises should take about an hour each to complete. This is also an exercise you should return to every six months to understand how your Inspiration is changing and developing .
2. Create a portfolio by selecting from your past images: those you like the most. Try to pick 20 images you like and print them at 5"x4" or a similar size. You need them all the same size so that when they are laid out next to each other you can take them all in as a whole. They also need to be big enough for you to take a reasonably close look. In doing this exercise it's important that your selection is not influenced by other people. These are the images that *you* like best. When you have all the images laid out together, do they look like a body of work? Are there any common themes that come through in the images? Make notes for each image on why you like it so much and what prompted you to include it . In this exercise you are trying to develop your understanding of what factors inspire and influence your work. You should update this portfolio every six to 12 months by replacing images with new images you consider to be better. Remember, though, you must keep to the limit of 20 images.
3. A further useful variation on the previous exercise is to pin the images to a board that is hung where you see it regularly. It's quite common for your response to an image to change when you are viewing it regularly over a couple of weeks.
4. Create a list of all the subjects you think you would like to photograph, together with what you think may be driving this desire. Is it because you have seen a great image you admire from your favourite pro or is there something deeper? Try to uncover the various layers of your thinking. Keep this list so that you can review and update it each month. This exercise is all about using your logical thinking brain to come up with possible subjects to photograph. The next exercise is about trying to get in touch with your sub-conscious mind.
5. Take time out away from any interruptions to become quiet and sit still. Once you are calm, ask yourself is there anything you would like to photograph. Don't try to think up subjects (that was the previous exercise), just let your mind go blank

and continue to ask yourself the questions. In time, thoughts will run through your mind and you will start to identify subjects you feel inspired by. In time, you will grow to recognise that the feeling about these subjects is very different from the list created in the previous exercise (although there may be similarities). An example from my own experience is that I currently have a strong desire to photograph a pair of old binoculars. I don't know why but I feel driven to photograph these so have recently purchased an old, cheap pair on eBay that show plenty of wear. This is very odd for a landscape photographer – and your examples may be equally strange. Don't question this, just go along and follow your intuition; the results may surprise you. I suggest you do this exercise every month.

6. Create a list of photographers whose work you admire. Now research their work further on the Internet to find as many example images as possible that inspire you. What is it about these images that you find inspiring? After your research, can you decide if it's just a few images or many images that inspire you? If it's many images, what is common across these? As a landscape photographer, people often expect me to be inspired by Ansel Adams but it's actually only a handful of his images (for example, "Winter Storm Clearing") that I really love. If you find something similar with your own chosen photographers, what can you learn from this? This should be an ongoing exercise where you try to find new photographers to research every couple of months.

7. Start a clippings file by cutting out magazine photographs that you find inspiring. Every few months spend time reviewing this file to remove images that no longer appeal, as well as adding new ones. Try to arrange the images into groups that represent their appeal to you and then analyse them to understand why. What can you learn about your own inspiration from these images?

8. Spend some time developing your photography mindset. This is probably best explained with the following example. I shoot landscapes. It's something I love to do and I also love being outside in wonderful locations. When in such wonderful locations it's all too easy to be overtaken by the need to take the photographs whilst the light and conditions are good. This can lead to feelings of urgency. This is not a good frame of mind from which to be shooting scenes of beauty and tranquillity. A better approach would be to turn up at a location early and spend some time just enjoying the area and surveying the scene. I don't even mean surveying the scene to identify the best shooting position; I mean simply walking around to enjoy the moment whilst resisting the urge to take pictures. When you are ready to begin you will know it. You will also find a better understanding of the image you want to create and the emotion you want to convey. Take another example: if you are a portrait photographer you might want to spend time before a shoot getting to know your subject. Portrait photographers often talk about the need to relax the client before a shoot. But equally the photographer needs to relax with the client in order to produce their best work. This is what I call the photographer's mindset. It's about getting into the zone where you can produce your best work. How you do this will be personal to you but you need to spend

time developing this skill.

9. Sometimes you don't have the luxury of spending time to get into the zone. For example, as a landscape photographer I may need to turn up well before dawn to capture the best light. As it's dark, I don't have the opportunity to look around and enjoy my location. In these circumstances, I like to do my preparation the night before, especially if I haven't taken many images recently. Here my process is simply to look through photography I love and that I find inspiring. If I have images of the location that I have previously shot and that I am pleased with, I look over them. Spending time in this way helps me prepare for the following morning and helps me into the right mindset. If time might be an issue for you, what could you do to help you get into "the zone" and be ready to produce your best work from the start?

10. Despite all your best efforts, there may be circumstances or conditions that prevent you from being inspired. One example might be where you head out to shoot a landscape and want it to be bathed in golden light. When you arrive the weather has turned and storm clouds are rolling in. The temptation is to feel despondent and not to bother taking photographs. Under such circumstances you should pause to clear your mind before you begin shooting. The problem here is that you are confusing Inspiration with Vision. The expectation of a golden sunrise is really you projecting a vision for a location before you have seen the location and conditions. You should develop a vision only once you have arrived at a location and found your inspiration. Until you arrive, you should keep a clear mind and not set up expectations. Once you begin to shoot and work with a location, look to develop a new vision of images that you might create. I can recall a number of situations where this has worked for me, where I might otherwise have come away with nothing. Practice keeping your mind clear of expectations before a shoot and then learn to recognise what inspires you. I once saw an exhibition of portraits where the subject was deemed by the public to be "ugly". However, the photographer had produced such powerful and engaging images of these people that they were truly remarkable. Can you imagine how different the result would have been if the photographer had the expectation of producing images of beautiful people rather than producing beautiful images where the beauty in the person could be seen? How can you apply this to your own work and style of photography?

11. When you have reviewed and tried the sample exercises in this section, take some time to think about your own needs and how you might develop your inspiration. Try to create your own exercises that you feel will fill the gaps you identify.



## Developing Vision

In the previous section we examined inspiration and identified ways to recognise what inspires us. But it's not enough to understand and shoot the things that inspire us. The ability to develop a strong vision for what you are photographing is equally important to achieving a good result. Ansel Adams often talked about pre-visualising a scene, which he would then try to realise through his skills with the camera and later in the darkroom. We may all have gone digital (well, quite a few of us) but the need to pre-visualise a scene hasn't changed!

Today we still need to develop a strong vision for the images we create. Inspiration is really that flash of recognition that you have a vision of an image you could create. You recognise this in a split second but then often it is gone. Your vision is just like trying to focus on a subject with your camera; when you don't take time to focus your lens on the subject it appears blurred and the same is true of your vision. You need to spend time to develop and refine your vision so that you can bring it into focus and create a stronger image .

In order to present the strongest image to the viewer, you will need to develop your vision so that it's clear and in focus. The tools you have at your disposal to achieve this clear "focus" for your vision are the camera, lens characteristics, composition and post-production work. How you achieve this is an iterative process so as you work with these tools you might realise you need to strengthen your vision further or even develop it in a new direction. It's therefore important to listen to your own intuition as you work with a scene. Sometimes it's possible to do this at the point of taking the photograph by considering your thoughts and emotions as you continue to work the scene. You need to have a clear vision in place if you want to achieve consistently good results (although I will qualify this later with an exception).

Consider the following image. When I saw this scene I had a flash of inspiration , a momentary glimpse of the image I wanted to create. I continued to work the scene until I captured the image you see below.



But the image you see above wasn't the image that I had pre-visualised; to achieve that I needed to work on the image further with my editing tools. You can see the finished image below.



In order for me to be able to create this finished image it was necessary to consider my vision and become very clear in my own mind what I was trying to create. If I hadn't done this I would have been shooting and hoping I would capture a great image (something I used to do when I first started in photography). To develop my vision I had to "work the scene" by experimenting with angles and composition until I was confident that I had captured the image I wanted and which would later be refined in post-capture editing. I would not have had confidence in the image had I not taken time to pre-visualise the finished image.

Once I had captured this image I was happy to move on and look for my next flash of inspiration. When I came to edit the image on my computer I made bullet point notes about the changes I wanted to make; which areas I would darken, lighten, change the contrast on etc. I also make simple sketches to help as a guide for when I applied my adjustments. Again, this would not have been possible had I not taken time to bring my



vision for the finished image into focus in my mind.

If you adopt a similar approach (and I suggest you do) be careful not to limit your thinking by wondering how you will achieve the end vision. That is not important at this stage, but what is important is trying to describe the changes you would make in order to focus your vision.

Now for that exception I mentioned earlier. Sometimes you can struggle to achieve clarity of vision for an image. You know there is a great image in there just waiting to be realised but you can't seem to bring it into focus. One very productive way to generate ideas is through experimentation.

Some of the editing tools we will look at later include pre-sets that can be used to apply a style or look to an image quickly. Experimenting with these can sometimes help you identify new options for working with the image, which you can then incorporate into your vision. This is a great method but be sure to recognise this is experimentation and that you are seeking flashes of inspiration. It should be divorced from the process of producing the finished image. The best analogy I can give is the artist who makes rough sketches in order to finalise his or her vision before starting to paint a masterpiece.

### **The Link to Style**

One aspect of photography that many believe marks out a person as being an accomplished photographer is having a recognisable style. Often this is easy for us to see in others but not in ourselves.

Style comes from a consistency of vision; how we see and choose to interpret the world around us. If we work hard to develop our vision, over time consistency will arise and there will be characteristics in our work that become recognisable to others. If we don't develop a clear vision for our work, people won't identify such characteristics and no common thread will exist throughout our work. If your vision is weak your style will be invisible.

If you are to develop a recognisable style it can be helpful to work around themes and produce a body of work for each. Too many photographers focus on the "best picture" mentality. They seek to create a great image and then move on to find the next without thinking how they can develop a theme. When you challenge yourself to pursue a project or a number of projects then you begin to think differently. You will find yourself having more creative ideas as you search for ways to explore a project, which will improve both your inspiration and vision. For example, I have a passion for sand dunes and so am always on the lookout for locations where I can indulge this and shoot images such as the one below.



The challenge when taking photographs is to pause long enough to understand our vision for the scene. After that split second realisation that there is something attractive about a subject, most people react by raising the camera and capturing frame after frame. This didn't really happen in the days when we shot film because few people could afford the film or processing. With digital photography the extra cost of each image is negligible so we tend to operate in this way. Often people are hoping that they will magically achieve the right composition or (worse) that there will be a good composition among all the variations they have shot. Few pause and consider each shot in order to use it to build and enhance their vision. You may have heard the expression that "Good is the enemy of Excellent". Well, photography is the enemy of vision. If you fill your time by constantly snapping photographs then you won't have time to think about and refine your vision for the image you are seeking.

What should happen when we are faced with a flash of inspiration is that we pause for a moment and ask, "why am I attracted to this"? Is it the light or the form or the texture or something else? Once we have identified these factors it becomes possible to pre-visualise

how we might want the finished image to appear.

By taking time to understand your vision of the finished image you are able to decide on the characteristics of the image and therefore how it should be captured. For example, do you want a large or shallow depth of field? Do you want to emphasise the foreground or compress the scene? Is there any movement in the scene and if so do you want to freeze or blur the movement? These decisions can be made only when you understand your vision for the image you are creating. It is these decisions that allow you to make the choices about how to use your camera to capture the photograph .

In the example of the sand dune scene above (shot in Death Valley) my vision was to take a small section of the dunes, cropping out the bushes and any vegetation. This would then appear more like people tend to imagine a desert. I also wanted to compress the dunes to make them stack up and emphasise their height. These decisions directed me to select a long focal length for my camera.

When I composed the image I wanted to create a “perfect desert” scene that someone might imagine. One of the problems was the distant mountains that lie just beyond the dunes. Including these in the frame tended to distract from this vision. Again, the long focal length helped me crop out the mountains to achieve the composition that matched my vision .

Once I had found the composition I wanted, I made other decisions to emphasise my vision of creating a hazy, dream-like image that makes the viewer think of a hot desert. I did this by selecting a relatively wide aperture to limit the depth of field . This also helped de-emphasise even further the distant mountains that could still be seen .

All these decisions allowed me to capture an image that matched my vision. I could then confidently take this image into post-production knowing that I could make further adjustments to make my vision clearer for the viewer. For example, I used a negative Clarity setting in the top half of the image to emphasise the hazy appearance of the distant dunes. I emphasised the texture of the sand in the foreground to create a greater contrast with the distant parts of the image to give a feeling of depth. I also enhanced the golden colour of the early evening sun to give a feeling of greater warmth to the scene.

Had I not invested the time at the point of image capture to think about my vision the process of taking a good photograph would have been down to luck. My approach allowed me to capture an image that I like, which makes photography less frustrating and more rewarding. If I had taken a “random shooting” approach, without pausing to understand what I wanted to achieve, I would have been unable to create this finished image. Because the variables for capturing the scene created almost infinite possibilities, the chance that an image shot without thought would be successful were very slim. Even worse, because I wouldn't have had a vision for the scene that I could work with later in post-capture editing it's very unlikely that my audience would be able to engage with the image.

Now , reading my description above you would be forgiven for thinking that I came along, paused for a while to assess the scene, took the shot and then moved on. But this was not the case. I did shoot lots of images but that was all part of the process of bringing my

vision into focus. You may or may not find this way of working is something you need to do but it's how I have developed my shooting style . You need to find your own approach to the problem of how to bring your vision into focus as you seek to capture your image . My approach may or may not work for you.

Some people find that in order to pre-visualise a scene as a finished image they need to capture an image and examine it further. This is perhaps because the photograph cuts out all the distractions surrounding the frame of capture. Equally, it will highlight other distractions that are found within the frame that might otherwise go unnoticed. In taking a photograph and examining it you should be asking the question, "how well does this image represent my vision" and "will I be able to adjust this in post-capture editing to represent my vision"?

In the days when there was no choice but to shoot film, people would assess a scene using a cut-out frame that they would hold up to one eye. Today we have digital cameras that can do the same job and provide instant feedback. Even some of the best large format film photographers now use a digital compact camera as a preview device. Some people treat this practice with a sort of disdain, referring to it as "chimping." There is nothing wrong with "chimping" if you are doing it for the right reasons; just try to avoid making the chimp noise .

*[In case you don't already know, "chimping" is a slang term for looking at photos after taking a shot and comes from the appearance of someone doing so, with wide eyes, pursed lips and saying "oh, oh, oh, oh" under their breath, reminiscent of chimpanzees.]*

## **The Importance of Audience**

Above we discussed the need to develop a strong vision in order to connect with your audience but to make this connection you first need to understand your audience. It's important you spend time thinking about who is the audience for your work and what message you want to convey to them. This is important, as it will also have an effect on your style. If you are constantly shooting for different audiences your style will shift each time. Remember, consistency of style is a worthy objective as it helps people understand and connect with your work .

Knowing who the audience is for your work is an important thing but one most photographers don't think about. When first starting out in photography you just want anyone to look at and appreciate your work so you think everyone is your audience, but this is far too wide a description to help you develop. Too generic an audience definition will only confuse your work, making your vision and style less obvious and appealing to others .



Let's consider an example to help us understand this better. If you were to shoot images for a stock library, they would need to appeal to the likes of magazine editors and advertisers. They in turn will want images to appeal to their audiences as well as fit in with the overall style of, say, a magazine. Each will have different requirements because they are all serving different markets in a different style. There is no way they will all want the same image, even though they may recognise it as being a great image. Typically, they will all want an image that conveys a strong concept and which is easy to understand, but some may want the message to be positive, others negative, some may want the image to shock etc. As a stock photographer, your job will be to understand the market you are serving and shoot accordingly.

Contrast this with a fine art image that is shot with the purpose of being hung on a wall. Even if this is shot in the same location as the stock image it will most likely be very different from the one shot for stock. The stock image will need to have a strong conceptual or documentary component, whilst the fine art image will probably emphasise a strong emotional component. As a photographer, it's difficult enough to develop a strong

style to appeal to one particular audience; trying to develop appeal for multiple audiences is virtually impossible.

One final point worth mentioning is that you may not want an audience and decide you will be producing work that appeals to you and only you. If others decide they like your work, it's a bonus. I know some great photographers who follow this approach successfully. But this does require a strong conviction and again a strong vision for your work. It's very difficult to stay true to your vision if it does not elicit a strong positive response from those with whom you share it. There are very few people who are able to ignore the opinions of others.

## Exercises to Develop Vision

Completing the following exercises will help you improve the Vision element of your photography. As with the other exercises in this book, you should revisit these at regular intervals as well as developing additional exercises of your own:

1. Consider the question, “will you be producing photography for yourself or for others?” If you intend to produce images purely for yourself then you will need to ignore the views of others and instead listen to your internal voice. You will need to rely on this voice to tell you if you are satisfied with the image or what changes you will need to make. Learning to ignore the views and opinions of others will be a difficult skill that you will need to master . Practice this by reviewing your favourite images and making notes about how you would improve each image in order strengthen your Vision.
2. If you decide you will be sharing your work with an audience, spend time defining who your audience will be. Try to build a mental image of this “audience” just as writers build up a mental picture of their readers. Having a clear image of who you want your work to appeal to will help strengthen your vision. It’s also important to realise that even though you will be producing work for an audience your work must still satisfy you and your own standards . You must be satisfied with your work in order to be happy to share it with others.
3. Develop a systematic approach to guide you in evaluating each subject before you shoot it. Create this approach, a mental checklist almost, to help you think about an image in order to transform your inspiration into a clearer vision. What questions will you ask yourself? What decisions will you need to take in order to refine your vision? Write this all down and work with it so that it becomes a repeatable process you follow each time you are inspired to shoot an image .
4. Think about how you can use the characteristics of your camera to better represent your vision. Consider and make notes about the shutter speed, depth of field, selective focus, noise or grain, colour and any others factors you can think of. How can you use these things to communicate your vision more effectively? How can you use these things to create a recognisable style for your work?
5. Spend time reviewing your clippings file and try to identify the photographer’s vision for each picture . Is there anything you would change if it had been you trying to capture this photograph?
6. Produce a series of ten images that will form a small body of work. Pick a subject or location you are familiar with and give yourself two hours to shoot the images. As you shoot, ensure you spend time trying to recognise your flashes of inspiration. When it happens, spend time developing your vision for the image.
7. Consider the set of images you produced in the previous exercise. Print them out and look at them as a group. Is it clear they are from the same body of work? Do they look like they have been produced at the same time? What is it about the pictures that makes you answer in this way?

8. To help you understand the previous point better, consider the two colour images below. Both are landscapes but I would never include them as part of the same body of work. Why do you think I say this? Would *you* include them together in the same set of images and why?



*Image 1*



*Image 2*

Now that we understand the importance of vision and how to develop this we can move our attention to the subject of Skills.





## Developing Your Skills - Capture

The area of photography that receives most attention in books and magazines is that of developing your skills. Whilst it could be argued that the ability to recognise inspiration and develop a vision for a subject are both skills, these areas are seldom dealt with. To avoid confusion, our definition of photography skills will be:

1. Capture Skills – These are the skills relating to how you compose your image and use your camera to capture a photograph that represents your vision.
2. Post-Capture Skills – These are the skills you use to manipulate your image in order to emphasise your vision .

Shortly, we will look at each of these in greater depth, but first let's consider a simple example .



I captured the image above using a Canon 5D MkII and 17-40mm L series lens. It looks like quite a simple capture but there is more to it than you might expect at first glance. Here are some of the considerations and decisions that I made at the point of capture in order to arrive at an image that was suitable for post-production.

1. The image was captured with a very short focal length to give a wide angle of view. This was selected to give the feeling of depth, with the steps flowing down to the bottom of the hill. If you look to the house on the left you can see the distortion in the window that is unavoidable when using an extreme wide angle.
2. Because a very wide angle lens was chosen it was necessary to position the back of the camera vertical. Had this not been done the lamppost would not have appeared vertical in the image, leaning either to the left or the right .
3. Another effect of the wide angle is that the lamppost could have been lost in the

scene. To avoid this it was necessary to move in close. At the same time the steps could have lost their impact by appearing too far from the camera. It was therefore necessary to position the camera quite near to the ground and near to the foot of the light .

4. As you can see, the scene was shot in the early evening. I recall waiting for around 30 minutes for the lamp to come on but it was equally necessary to time the shot so that there was still a hint of colour in the sky. I would say there was a window of around five minutes when the conditions were correct and it was necessary to plan ahead to be ready for this.

5. In addition to the previous point about timing, it was also necessary to avoid people in the scene. These are busy steps and people were walking up and down all the time. This meant the camera was frequently moved and then repositioned. I placed a mark on the ground to help me with this.

6. The image makes use of a large depth of field so the viewer feels drawn into the scene. Once printed, it's possible to examine distant subjects quite closely. This necessitated quite a small aperture, especially as this is a full frame camera.

7. One problem introduced by a small aperture is diffraction (interference with light waves causing images to lose sharpness) , so it was necessary to avoid stopping the lens down too far in order to produce a high quality image. With the lens stopped down I checked in live view at 100% magnification to confirm the entire scene was sharp.

8. The final aspect of depth of field was choosing the correct point of focus. I did consider taking multiple exposures with different focus points and then blending them in Helicon Focus. In the end I decided not to do this as I could achieve pretty much the depth of field I wanted through lens control and selecting a good point of focus at the base of the lamp.

9. With the small aperture and the low ISO setting to maximise quality, the exposure times were measured in seconds. It was therefore necessary to use the camera mounted on a tripod.

10. As longer exposure can result in higher noise, I switched on the long exposure noise reduction in the camera menu.

11. Exposure was also an important element in ensuring the highest quality image. I achieved correct exposure using a test shot in aperture priority mode and then using the exposure compensation dial to adjust the histogram. I used a technique known as “exposing to the right” in an attempt to improve image quality. This also necessitated shooting in RAW format.

12. Finally, I attached a graduated ND filter to the lens in order to darken the sky. This helped to balance the exposure between the sky and the ground. Without this, a lot of the ground would have become very dark or the sky would have been too light.

This may sound like a lot of thought and it is, but it's probably only beginning to scratch the surface of what was happening. It was also necessary to re-evaluate these decisions continually as conditions changed. This was possible only because I had developed my capture skills, knew my equipment well and was able to concentrate on achieving the right composition. Had my skills not been developed to this level I would have struggled to capture the scene. Achieving an image that represented my vision would have been largely down to luck .

The good news is that what may seem like hard work when described like this becomes second nature – but only after a lot of practice.

Of course, all this effort going into the image capture was only half the task. Once I had captured an image that I was happy with , it was necessary to process it further in order to emphasise the elements that inspired my vision.

Let's examine some of the exercises you can use to develop your capture skills.



## Exercises to Develop Your Capture Skills

The following exercises will help you develop your skills further but they do assume a level of knowledge (for example, that you understand how to use the aperture setting on your camera to control depth of field, together with selecting the point of focus). If you find you don't understand some of the points raised, then you will need to concentrate some effort initially on developing your camera skills. We will not cover camera controls in this book as there is plenty of material already available (something I plan to add to in the future).

1. Write out the process you go through in taking a photograph. What decisions do you make and in what order? When do you select the focal length to use? What determines your ISO setting? What about aperture? There are probably lots of decisions you are making without being aware of them or even why you are making them. Are you making decisions based on your vision for a particular image or are you making your decisions based on habit?
2. Looking at your answer to the question above, review the process to see what else you might be missing. Try out the process with your camera, following it step by step.
3. Which of the steps in your picture-taking process needs to be expanded? For example, a simple statement such as "frame the image" probably hides a huge number of decisions and steps. You are probably making many of these decisions almost subconsciously, such as checking around the edge of the frame for distractions. Think about these and really draw out as much details as possible.
4. Make a list of all the characteristics of an image that you can influence by using the controls on your camera. For example, depth of field and introducing or preventing movement in the final image, to name just a couple. What settings can you use in the camera to affect these aspects of the image?
5. When you make decisions about the camera settings to use for a particular shot, what else are you compromising by making these selections? For example, a small aperture to achieve great depth of field may soften the image by introducing diffraction. A higher ISO to allow hand-holding might reduce image quality. What could you do to control each of these?
6. For each of the characteristics of an image (for example, movement or depth of field) create a list of ideas for incorporating these into your images.
7. Now look back at your clippings file and find example images that use some of the techniques you have just defined. For example, blurred waves on a beach resulting from long exposures. Now take each image in turn and consider the steps you believe the photographers may have taken and what decisions they made to capture each image. Do you know how to emulate what they produced using your shooting process developed above?
8. Reviewing each of the images again from the previous step, are there changes

you can identify in order to produce a better image than the photographer? How would you achieve these changes?

9. Look at the shooting process you have developed and ask yourself if it supports the types of images you want to create. For example, if you like to shoot panoramic images, when in your process do you make this decision and how do you adapt your process?

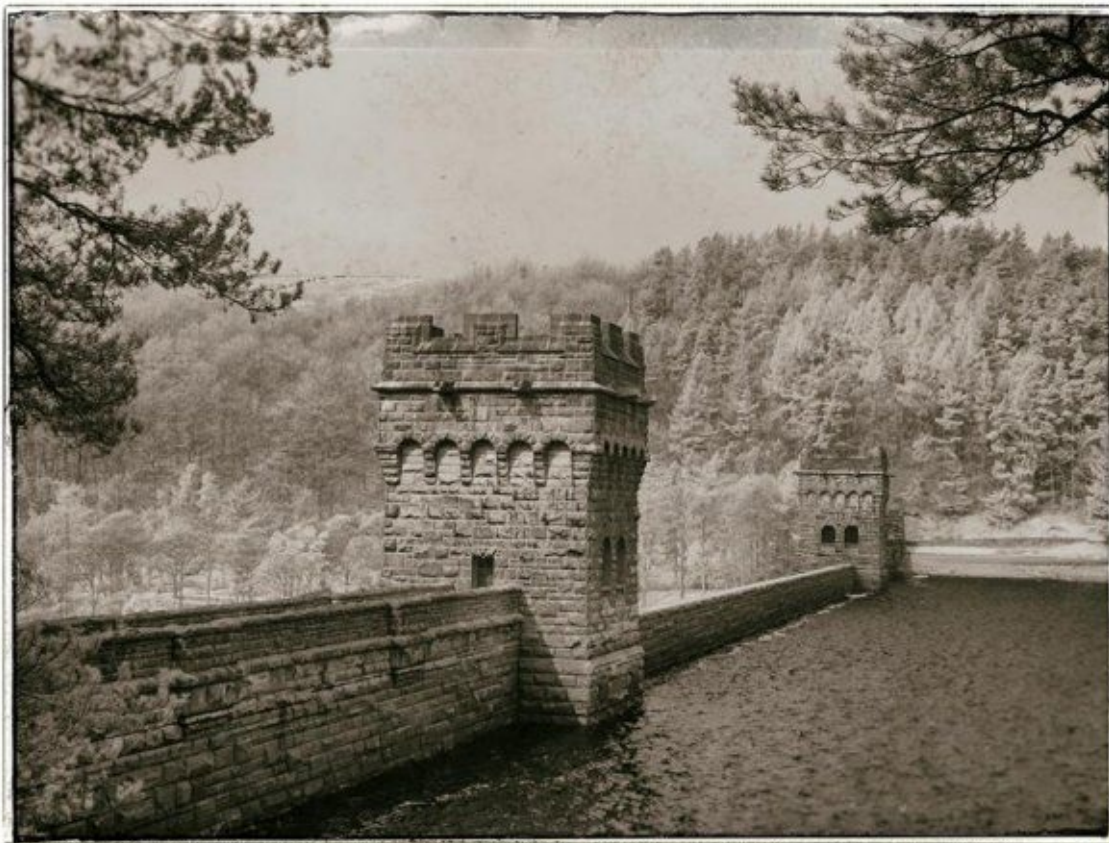
10. Based on everything we have covered to date, what skills do you need to develop further and how are you going to develop them?



## Composition

Composition is a critically-important skill necessary to the creation of beautiful images. When you get it right, your images just look great without anyone saying “that’s a great composition” but when you get it wrong people can see the composition is wrong (but probably couldn’t say why). The principles of good composition are timeless but should be invisible to the viewer. The viewer should not be able to see that you have used some contrived rule to create an image that conforms to their expectation.

What can happen when you try to follow rules without thinking for yourself is that you end up with compositions that don’t work. Such compositions lack inspiration and it becomes evident to the viewer that something is missing. Instead of following rules and taking a “painting by numbers” approach you should learn to develop your own ideas of what is a good composition. With time and practice you will grow to recognise these almost instinctively. You then find that when you capture an image you like, the “guidelines” of good composition are evident.



Consider the image above, which was carefully composed to create a strong composition. Here are some of the elements that are present in the scene and which add to this strength of composition:

1. There are three planes in the scene, which help to give the image depth. In the foreground there are the tree branches on either side. In the middle distance we have the first turret on the dam, which is also the focal point of the image and which draws the eye. In the distance we have the second turret and the trees on the hillside.
2. Notice that the trees in the distance are not as well defined and are lighter, with

less contrast than the middle distance or foreground objects. This makes sense to our brains, which interpret the objects as being further away and provide depth to the image.

3. The tree branches in the foreground have been placed to either side of the image. This helps frame the image and also provides a sense of balance. Now imagine the tree branches aren't there. Instead, you would have empty space in the sky and your eye would tend to wander out of the frame.
4. There is an area of open sky in the image but it is well framed and provides balance to the large area of water at the bottom of the picture. Most images need some sense of balance in order to work well.
5. The dam wall itself runs diagonally across the frame, which gives a dynamic feeling to the image.
6. The turret has been placed on the point of the golden mean (one of the many documented compositional "rules"). But this wasn't done in a calculated way, it was done by feel. By moving myself around, I found the placement I felt was strongest. (Remember your feet are two of your best friends for finding the right composition.)
7. Notice also that the top of the turret doesn't cut the tree line on the hillside. Had it protruded above the line it would have created a distraction and the image wouldn't have been as strong.
8. Whilst the border has been added to create an aged, nostalgic effect, it also helps to hold the viewer's eye within the frame, focusing attention in the centre of the image.

You might now be wondering about how you will learn all these complex 'rules' and recall them in order to create strong compositions. Well, allow me to put your mind at rest; you don't need to remember them. What you will need to do is train your eye to recognise strong compositions, hopefully in an instant. This will take time and effort but it is achievable. It will also help you with your inspiration and vision, as you will begin to identify more and more opportunities to shoot great work. In a moment we will look at some of the exercises you can do to help you achieve this.

The other aspect to composition that you will need to develop is a strong understanding of the characteristics of different lenses and how you can use them to compose your images and emphasise your vision. For example, a long lens such as a 100mm focal length will allow you to crop in tightly on your subject and remove distractions. It will also allow you to throw the background out of focus, even though the lens might not have a very wide maximum aperture. Additionally, a long lens will create a less distorted image than, say, a wide-angle lens. These characteristics make a long focal length ideal for portrait photographs.

Wide-angle lenses, by contrast, allow you to move in close to a subject so that they loom large in the foreground whilst retaining a wider view of the surrounding area. This makes



it an ideal choice for many landscape images where you want to emphasise a foreground subject in the scene whilst making distant objects look much smaller. It may not be a great choice where you want to emphasise the height and size of a more distant object.

Consider an example where you want to photograph an impressive mountain. Using a long lens, you might crop in to only part of the scene but the scale of the mountain will be apparent. Select a wider focal length and you might be able to represent the entire mountain but its scale might be less impressive. Neither of these options is right or wrong on its own, but will depend on the vision you have for the scene you are trying to capture.

## Composition Exercises

Try the following exercises to help you develop improved compositions:

1. Research all the rules of composition that you can find: for example the Rule of Thirds, The Golden Mean etc. Try to identify as many as possible and find example images to support these rules. A great introductory book on this subject is "[Learning to See Creatively](#)" by Bryan Peterson.
2. Review your clippings file to identify those images that seem to have the most pleasing composition. Why do you find these images pleasing? What "rules" do you think the photographer has adopted in creating the images?
3. Select an image that you like and that you think has a strong composition. Now take a piece of paper, a pencil and a ruler and draw a box the same shape as the photograph. This box represents the image frame. Inside the box sketch the key elements of the image that you feel create the strong composition. When you have finished the sketch, hold it at arm's length and ask if it is still a strong composition. If it isn't, what elements of the composition do you think are missing? Is the use of colour creating or adding to the composition? Is it the use of light and shade? When photographers think about composition we often think about the arrangements of objects within the frame but other elements are also present. When artists create a strong composition they will often use other tools beyond just the objects. How can you, as a photographer, also learn to use these tools?
4. Visit an art museum or gallery with paintings on display. Look over some of the images and answer the question, "how has the artist created a pleasing composition? What are the 'rules' of composition that they have employed?"
5. Look over some of your older images and select one to work with. Open the picture in your image editor and look for as many different ways as you can to crop it in order to produce an image with a stronger composition. Try to find at least five different compositions.
6. Go out with your camera and photograph a landscape scene. You should pick one location and one point in that location from which you can take your pictures. How many different ways can you compose the image using all your lenses? Don't forget that you can also adjust your height. Which image is the best and why?
7. Look at the following image. Do you think it is compositionally strong? Why do you give this answer? How could it be improved?





## Developing Your Skills - Post Capture

Post-capture processing of your images is a vital component in sharing your vision with the world and connecting with your audience. It's very rare that an image taken directly from the camera will be able to express clearly what was in the photographer's mind when the shutter was released. Even if the image can clearly communicate the photographer's vision it's even rarer that an image could not be improved through post-production work. If you really want to master your craft to an exceptional level you will need to develop your post-capture image editing skills.

Take, for example, the following image of Yewbarrow in the English Lake District, captured from the Screesabove Wastwater. It had been a stormy day but eventually shafts of sunlight began to break through the clouds to light up the fells. This wonderful, clear storm light was contrasting against the dark storm clouds over the mountains, creating vivid, saturated colours on the hills. That is the vision that I wanted to capture and share with my audience.



The resulting image above doesn't really match up to the scene as described and certainly doesn't convey my vision. The primary reasons for this are some of the techniques I used when making the capture. These were designed to optimise the quality of the final image but create an overexposed image that lacks contrast and saturation. For example, I used a Neutral Density graduated filter to darken the sky but then over exposed the image as much as possible without burning out the brightest points so as to minimise shadow noise whilst maximising image detail. (This is the "exposing to the right" technique I mentioned earlier.)

In order to use this technique effectively it was also necessary to shoot the image in RAW format, which then required conversion to an image format that could be edited. As part of this conversion process, I assigned a large colour space to the image (ProPhoto RGB) in order to give the greatest colour/tonal range when printed. To make this image match my vision at the time of capture, it was necessary to adjust the image in Lightroom as part of the RAW conversion. Following this, I made further enhancements using Photoshop to

boost saturation, contrast and detail as well as dodging and burning. The resulting image can be seen below. The improvement should be obvious; if it isn't, calibrate your screen now.



All the adjustments could have been carried out in either application (Lightroom or Photoshop) but I chose to use both as this is the preferred workflow I have developed for myself. The drawback is that this is complex and time-consuming. To help you develop your skills with these programs I have provided a range of tutorials you can download free from my Lenscraft website <http://www.lenscraft.co.uk/training/136.php> and [http://www.lenscraft.co.uk/training/photography\\_tutorial.html](http://www.lenscraft.co.uk/training/photography_tutorial.html).

If you would really like to master Photoshop then I would suggest you take a look at my book “Essential Photoshop: How to use 9 essential tools and techniques to transform your photography (but I would, wouldn't I?) You can find out more on my website at <http://www.lenscraft.co.uk/resources/163.html>.

## Accelerating Results

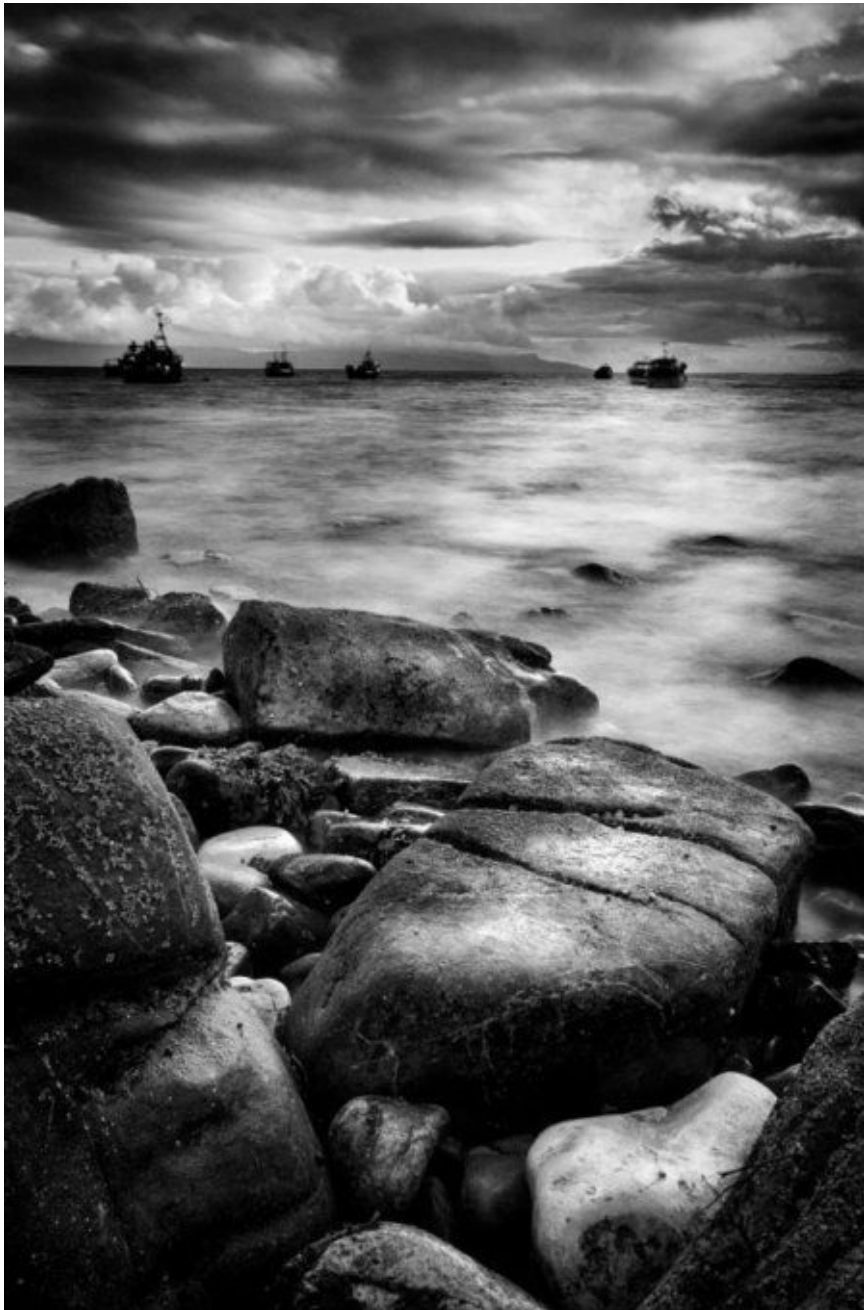
The real problem most photographers I speak to appear to have with post-production work is that the tools are complicated and often cause confusion. The most powerful editing programs can take a considerable amount of time to learn and even longer to master. They have so much flexibility designed into them that you often don't know where to start. But without post-production work the true potential in your work will not be revealed. What you need is a way to accelerate your productivity and shorten your learning. One solution is to use Filters.

Take the following example of an image following initial conversion from RAW to TIFF. This conversion was completed using Lightroom. (The colours in the image are a little odd in order to improve the conversion to black and white) .



Below you see the converted image, which has been produced by converting the above image to black and white. I did this using Nik Silver Efex Pro, a superb filter that works with a range of image editing programs, including Lightroom, Photoshop, Elements and

Aperture.



I produced the final image in a little less than five minutes and it has a wonderful tonal range with excellent image quality. Attempting this conversion in Photoshop alone previously required around two hours' processing and ten years to master the software. Proficiency with the Nik software took around a day, whilst mastery took only a few months to achieve. I will leave you to do the sums but that's much more time you can spend producing images and shooting new work. Whilst the Nik software is an additional cost, when it can increase your productivity and shorten your learning to this extent, it's money well spent.

As well as most filters being easier to use than many of the popular image editing packages, filters are more "interactive" tools. Their speed of use and instant previews allow you to explore your vision very quickly with an image. Take, for example, the Nik filters that use Control Point adjustments. When using Nik Viveza, you can place a Control Point on an image to adjust part of the image selectively. Making complex selections that may take hours in Photoshop are as simple as repositioning a Control Point



and changing its size. You can then adjust the selected area to make it lighter or darker, affect the colour balance, contrast, saturation and appearance of detail. All this can be done quickly and with little learning (in comparison with tools such as Photoshop). If you find the results are not to your liking you can quickly amend them.

If you are interested in finding out more about how I integrate filters in my workflow you can download free image fact sheets from my Lenscraft website using the following link (<http://www.lenscraft.co.uk/resources/164.html>).

## Starting with the End in Mind

Before embarking on the post-capture adjustment of an image, it can be beneficial to write out the changes you would like to apply. When presented with an image, most people will immediately start to make adjustments without understanding what they hope to achieve. Instead of having a clear vision for the image and an outline of the changes needed to support this, they start experimenting until they find something they like. With experience, such experimentation can be a productive route, but to achieve this you first need to practice. Starting with an end in mind and working towards a defined vision for your image will not only help you achieve a better standard of image but also help you to develop your skills faster.

Consider the following image by way of a simple example. The image was produced in Lightroom and has been converted from RAW to TIFF, with only a few minor adjustments having been applied.



This image is pleasant but not impressive and requires further enhancement so I have identified the following changes:

1. Increase the overall contrast.
2. Increase the saturation.
3. Create the effect of warm light falling on the pebbles.
4. Boost the colours in the sky to enhance the sunset.
5. Create some structure and definition in the waves as they wash up on the shore. At present they appear as an uninteresting white mass.
6. Darken the left hand side of the rock at the edge of the frame so that the eye isn't pulled out of the side of the frame.

These adjustments were then applied to the image using Nik Viveza and you can see the result below.



Whilst the adjustments have been quite minor they have significantly improved the appeal and emotion in the image. This is now a much more engaging image for the viewer.

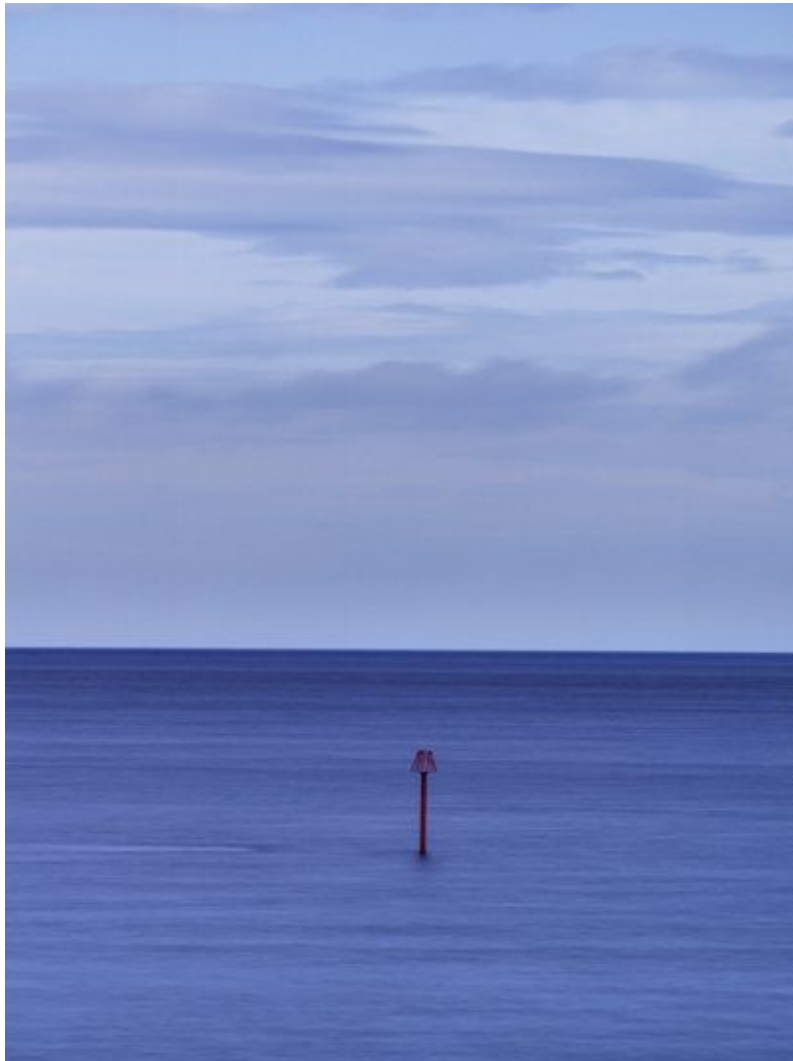
The key to achieving post-capture improvement in an image is not just knowing how to use the editing tools but knowing how to control the emotion of the image. You must be very clear about the changes you want to make in order to achieve this. For example, how the viewer's eye is attracted towards areas of greater detail, contrast and colour and away from areas that are darker and that lack definition. Editing tools provide a means to make these changes to your images but you need to develop your artistic vision first in order to understand what changes you want to make .

If you have not spent time developing your artistic vision, trying to make even subtle adjustments to an image will prove difficult and more down to good luck than skill. Knowing the tools and how to use them is only part of the skill you must develop. Spending time to evaluate and understand your image and the changes you would make (even if you don't yet know how to make them) is the key to success .

## Understanding Image Quality

So far we have concentrated on the artistic aspects of post-production but we should also consider the qualitative dimension. The most artistic result can be ruined by a lack of attention to the quality of the image. Factors such as resolution, choice of output medium, noise control or removal, sharpness or blur are all important characteristics of the final result. These factors must be considered during the capture stage then carefully controlled throughout post-capture image processing .

The natural approach most photographers take, especially those who have been involved in photography for any length of time, is to strive for perfect image quality. Only ten years ago, it was very difficult to produce high quality images so most people worked very hard to develop this skill (me included). Today the tools we have at our disposal make producing high quality images relatively straightforward , once you have mastered a few basic skills. Consequently, we can tend to forget just how much effect flaws in our photography can have on our finished images. Consider the following two images, which were produced using a 10 second exposure.



The first image above has been optimised to reduce image noise and provide attractive vibrant colour. Now look at the following version of the same image.



This second image has been purposely degraded to appear old and faded with scratches, smears and even a simulated light leak. Yet it's this old and degraded look that often appeals to people's sense of nostalgia and emotion , much more than the perfect image. If you asked 100 people which of these they would prefer to hang on the wall of their home I strongly suspect it would be the second image. So don't jump to conclusions that quality is about achieving excellence. It's really about being in control of the different variables in your photography.



The following brief lists cover factors that you should consider when developing your skills. These are not exhaustive lists and you should seek to identify further characteristics from images that impress you. Remember, these are lists to prompt you to think, not lists of answers. Research is part of the learning process .

### Quality Image Capture

We have already discussed camera control, but it's essential you understand how to use your camera and accessories in order to control the image quality. Here are some of the factors to consider and research:

1. Noise – Noise in your images is different from grain and generally needs to be avoided. Minimal noise can help you produce the optimum image quality and sharpness, so how can you do this with your chosen camera system? At what ISO level does noise become a problem and how can you avoid this? I'm sure you already know that you need to shoot in RAW format to create the sharpest images and gain the greatest control over noise. But do you practice “exposing to the right”? What about making multiple exposures to blend images for optimum image quality? Are there other tools and tricks you could use with your camera to avoid noise?
2. Sharpness – Images captured in RAW format will always be sharper, cleaner and crisper than the same image captured as a JPEG, providing you process them correctly (see RAW conversion). Image sharpness is also a function of the lens quality and your shooting style. Do you understand when your lens performs at its best? Are your lenses of sufficiently high quality for how you want to use them? Some lenses are almost unusable when outside their optimum aperture range so if you have one of these you may want to consider trading it in for something better. The charm of some lenses is because they are so poor (for example, Holga and pinhole). Have you tested your lenses to understand when diffraction or chromatic aberration (the coloured fringe, usually red or blue, that appears around fine detail

placed against a bright background) becomes a problem? How well does the lens function in shade, in low light conditions or shooting into the sun? What are the other characteristics of the lens that might affect image quality? Are you able to hold your camera steady when shooting? It's amazing how many people can't and end up with images that simply aren't sharp. You need to understand your lenses and how to take control of them to produce your vision.

3. Exposure – High quality images start with a good exposure. Even if you want to degrade your image in post-capture processes, you should still aim to start with the highest quality image you can. A high quality starting image will provide you with the greatest flexibility. How can you ensure you capture the best exposure? Do you know how to use techniques such as “exposing to the right”? How far can you push your camera when “exposing to the right”? How can you control exposure to emphasise or freeze motion? If you shoot landscapes, can you use ND graduated filters to improve the exposure? If not, why not and what alternatives would you use and why? Do you use multiple exposures and image blending? Do you make use of HDR (High Dynamic Range photography where multiple identical images with different exposures are blended together)?

4. Lighting – Closely connected to exposure is lighting. Great light makes for wonderful images. Learning how to control or make the most of lighting conditions can help bring your images to life and propel them to a new level. Do you understand what type of lighting produces the highest quality images for your photography? What lighting conditions tend to produce low quality images and what are the characteristic problems that are seen in these images? How can you correct such problems, both during the image capture and afterwards in post-capture production? Are there lighting “tricks” and set ups that you can use to improve the lighting of your subject? What accessories can you use to manipulate and improve conditions (for example, reflectors)? What types of light might you encounter and how would you classify them? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type of light and how can you use them in your images?

5. Depth of Field – Depth of field is a great tool to use in order to communicate your vision and produce creative photography. How could you use depth of field in your images? How would you use it to give the impression of great distances? How could you use it to focus attention? What factors affect depth of field and how can you use them? How can you maximise depth of field with your camera and each of your lenses? When do your lenses perform at their best and how much depth of field does this provide? How can you produce greater depth of field than your camera allows, for example using focus-blending software, and how would you need to change your shooting style to use this? How could you utilise a shallow depth of field in your photography?

6. Movement – Movement in your images can be a powerful creative force. Think about a huge waterfall frozen by a fast shutter speed and how this can give the impression of power. Consider a field of wheat blowing gently in the wind and

using a slow shutter speed to blur the movement. Think about ways you could capture movement creatively in your images and how it might inject emotion. Think here not just in terms of shutter speed but also other factors such as flash. How can you represent movement in your images? What shutter speeds produce the best movement? How can you work with a combination of shutter speed and flash to create special effects?

7. Colour and tone – Colours and tones can be used to direct the viewer's attention as well as heighten emotions. Warm tones tend to come forward in the image whilst cool tones recede. How could you use different colours in your images to aid composition? Which colours or tones attract attention and which are often ignored? What can you do to control these factors?

## Quality in Post-Capture Processing

There are a number of factors in post-capture processing that you should work to understand:

1. RAW Conversion – As already mentioned, shooting in RAW format will allow you to produce the highest quality images but it will also give you much more flexibility in post-capture processing. You can, for example, change the colour temperature of the image without damaging the quality of the image. What RAW converter do you use and how can you use it to maximise sharpness and image quality? What other RAW converters are there that you might use? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each when you process your RAW files? Does your chosen RAW converter work better with some types of file than others? If so, what are the characteristics of the files that produce the best results and how can you use this?

2. Noise reduction – Unwanted noise will damage image quality, muddying the quality of colours and reducing image quality. All images will contain a level of noise and removing all the noise can even create a false appearance. Do you understand the different types of noise such as Colour Noise and Luminance Noise? Do your images benefit from applying noise reduction, and if so, how much? Is noise reduction best applied in the RAW converter or in a separate noise reduction filter? How can you best preserve detail when applying noise reduction? Do you encounter problems with the image beginning to appear false, and if so, how can you counter this? How can you apply noise reduction selectively to your images? What noise reduction programs are there and what are the strengths and weaknesses of each? What type of image is each best suited to?

3. Emotion – We have already mentioned emotion a number of times and this can be introduced at both the time of capture and in post-capture production. What tools can you use to introduce emotion into your images post capture? Think about colour and how different colours can be used to represent different moods. How can you use warm tones and cool tones?

4. Visual attention – By directing the viewer's attention around your image you



can control how it is perceived. This can be a very powerful approach in being able to communicate your vision. How can you control the attention of the viewer? How do aspects of the image – such as light, dark, contrast and saturation, – affect the perception of the viewer and hold their attention (or otherwise)?

5. Sharpness – Sharpness is something that we often strive for and we can even spend thousands of pounds buying the highest quality lenses. But could you use blurring and reduce the quality using special effects filters? How much sharpening do you need to make your images look their best? Do you apply a multi-step approach to sharpening? At what points in your workflow would you sharpen your images? How would you sharpen your images? What tools and options are available to you? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each and what problems do they introduce? How do you selectively sharpen your images?

6. Printing – Printing is quickly becoming a lost art with fewer and fewer people choosing to print their own photography. This is a shame as the results that can now be achieved with modern papers and printers can be exceptional. It's also far more rewarding than sending off your photographs to a print shop. Do you know how you should prepare your images for printing in order to achieve the best quality? How much sharpening should you apply? Are there other adjustments that benefit an image prior to printing? How can you control your printer in order to optimise print quality? How do you soft proof your images and adjust them to optimise print quality?

I hope this short section has given you plenty of ideas to think through. And please don't just assume that your current approach is the best. Things change so you need to remain vigilant and explore each step in detail, both now and in the future .



## Exercises to Develop Post-Capture Skills

Now let's turn our attention to exercises that can be used to develop your post-capture image editing:

1. Look back to your clippings file and select a few images at random. For each image you select, identify what techniques you think the photographer has applied to improve it. Look at features of the image such as use of shadows and highlights, saturation, contrast and detail. How has the photographer used light and then how has this been enhanced in post-capture production? Even if you can't identify the technique or tools that have been used to make the adjustment, describe what you see in words.
2. Looking back at the image from the previous exercise, how could it be further enhanced? How would you go about creating improvements? Would this require you to take special steps during the image capture or is it something you would do only in post-production?
3. Investigate some of the plug-in filters that can be used to improve the flexibility and capability of tools such as Photoshop and Lightroom. Investigate filters from companies such as Nik, Topaz, PhotoWiz, Akvis, OnOne, Neat Image, Alien Skin, Auto FX, Noiseware, Hugin, Helicon Focus, and others. Look for tools that provide you with lots of control over the characteristics you identified in the previous exercises. Ensure you try out the evaluation copies of these filters to see if you can create the types of adjustment you identified in the previous step above. Would it make sense for you to invest in any of these?
4. Identify a series of images from your own work that you feel have potential that isn't being realised. Why are they disappointing? Describe what changes you would make to each image to improve it (but don't describe how you would make these changes yet). Once you have a complete description of the changes you would make, describe how you would make these changes in your selected editing tools. List the adjustments step by step. Once you have fully described the steps, try to follow your list and apply the changes. What aspects of this exercise do you find difficult and how do you need to develop your skills to overcome this?
5. Look at well-known works of art from artists that are recognised as great masters. (If you are unsure of where to start, search the Internet for "Turner seascapes" then look at the Images page.) Can you identify how the great masters have used light, shade, contrast, texture and colour to control your perception of the painting? How could you use similar techniques in your photography and how could you enhance these features in post-production? What tools would you use and how? Now take a picture of a simple everyday object and try to create something amazing with post-capture image editing.
6. Study the photography of a well-respected professional and try to identify the features that characterise their work. How were these effects created and how can you incorporate such elements into your own work?

7. Spend some time designing a photograph. Find something that you want to photograph and think about how you would like the finished image to look. How does this affect your decisions about how to shoot the photograph and how would you process it post capture to realise your vision? Make notes and then execute the adjustments. Are you satisfied with the results, and why?

8. Examine your work from the previous exercise to evaluate critically the technical aspects of the image. Which areas are critically sharp and which are blurred? Is noise or pixilation evident? Are the corners soft? Find all the technical faults with each image and identify ways that this could have been avoided or what could be done to improve the results. Now shoot and process the images again but this time correcting the problems.





## Bringing Everything Together

These few final exercises bring together the different areas from this book in order to develop your skills as a photographer.

1. Do a web search for images from “Bob Carlos Clarke Cutlery Series 1999”. Spend some time analysing each of the images in detail. Look at questions such as what lighting was used? What is so special about this image and the subject? How does the subject relate to the background? Why has the chosen composition been used and could it have been improved? How has the image been processed and what could be done today to improve it? Do you like the images and why? You can, of course, repeat this exercise with any photographer.
2. Now it's your turn to create a series of five images for one of the following subjects. Be as creative as you can so long as your images are recognisable as belonging to a series. Try to incorporate some of the lessons you learned from evaluating the Bob Carlos Clarke images above. The subjects are:
  - a. An old film camera. There are plenty of old folders and the like that you can buy on eBay for very little. Pick one that you feel inspired by.
  - b. An old pair of binoculars. Again, there are plenty to choose from on eBay.
  - c. A collection of old tools, such as spanners and screwdrivers.
  - d. An old leather belt.
3. Now select a subject that really appeals to and inspires you. Create a series of ten images that demonstrate your vision. It's important that the images are clearly part of a series that relate to each other. Once you have completed this mini series, present it to other photographers and ask for honest feedback about how you could improve the series. Which is the weakest image and why? Which is the strongest image and why? Do you agree with their assessment and why? Will their assessment change any aspect of your work and why?





## What to Do Next

Now that you have read this book it's time to begin putting the advice into practice and developing your photography.

First, take some time to think about your photography and the three areas in the framework (Inspiration, Vision and Skill). Which area do you currently judge to be your weakest?

Work your way through the exercises in the book, starting with the area that you feel is the weakest. Spend at least a month practising the exercises associated with that particular area of the framework before moving on to the next area.

Each time you begin studying a new area, spend a little time to read through the exercises in order to become familiar with them. As you think through these, try to identify additional exercises that you might want to try.

When you reach the end of your month's practice, spend some more time thinking through possible future exercises. Build up a list with which to supplement this book. Most of all, start to practise , and practise on a regular basis. Practice will be rewarded by improvement and success. Do nothing and you will achieve nothing.




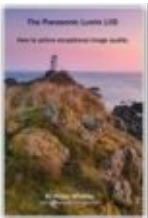
Good luck on your journey.





## Other Books by Robin Whalley

Here are some of my other books that are available on Kindle. For an up to date list why not visit my author page on Amazon. You can find me at [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Robin-Whalley/e/B00B1VIN5G/ref=ntt\\_dp\\_epwbk\\_0](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Robin-Whalley/e/B00B1VIN5G/ref=ntt_dp_epwbk_0)

	<p><b><u>Dramatic Black &amp; White Photography Using Nik Silver Efx Pro 2</u></b></p> <p>Learn how to create stunning black and white conversions with this class leading software. This book explores every aspect of the software. The book also provides worked examples explaining how to apply the software.</p> <p>View on <a href="http://Amazon.co.uk">Amazon.co.uk</a> or <a href="http://Amazon.com">Amazon.com</a></p>
	<p><b><u>Viveza: The Secret to Creating Breathtaking Photography</u></b></p> <p>Learn the secrets to creating breathtaking images with Viveza. All aspects of the software are described in detail. The text is supported by a series of worked examples which the reader can follow on their own computer.</p> <p>View on <a href="http://Amazon.co.uk">Amazon.co.uk</a> or <a href="http://Amazon.com">Amazon.com</a></p>
	<p><b><u>How to Avoid and Remove Image Noise with Nik Dfine 2</u></b></p> <p>High quality professional images don't exhibit noise. Being able to produce clean sharp images is the hallmark of a professional photographer. This book explains the sources of image noise and how to minimise this in your images. It also explains how to effectively use Nik Dfine to clean your images.</p> <p>View on <a href="http://Amazon.co.uk">Amazon.co.uk</a> or <a href="http://Amazon.com">Amazon.com</a></p>
	<p><b><u>The Panasonic Lumix LX5: How to achieve exceptional image quality</u></b></p> <p>The Panasonic LX5 is a truly amazing compact camera with the potential to produce exceptional image quality</p>

when used correctly. This book explains how to achieve the best image quality with this camera. Whilst the book is aimed at the LX5 user the same principles can also be used with other high quality compact cameras.

View on [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



### **Essential Photoshop: How to use 9 essential tools and techniques to transform your photography**

Photoshop is a vast program with many different ways to arrive at the end result. Whilst this makes it very flexible it also makes it confusing. This book cuts through all the options to explain the 9 essential tools every photographer should know. Master these and you can transform any image.

View on [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



### **Nik Sharpener Pro 3: How to achieve razor sharp images**

Image sharpening sound simple but is actually a complex, multi-step operation when applied correctly. This book explains how to achieve razor sharp images through the use of the Nik Sharpener Pro software.

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### **Essential Colour Management: What every photographer needs to know**

Colour Management is an essential technique that every photographer should be able to use. Unfortunately the processes and tools that you need to create a colour managed workflow are disjointed and far from intuitive. This book provides the essential knowledge you need to master this complex and confusing area.

View on [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



## **Nik Color Efex Pro: How to transform your photography**

Nik Color Efex Pro is a large collection of adjustment and enhancement filters which can be used to apply an almost limitless variety of effects to your photography. The range of choice is so large that it can be daunting, trying to select the correct filter for the task. This book explains not only the software but provides a complete reference to all the filters.

View on [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

Details of my books and planned publications are also published on my Lenscraft website (<http://www.lenscraft.co.uk/resources/163.html>).

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