

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

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P.24 DYNAMIC SENIORS
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Art Wolfe's Wild



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Senior Editor Joan Sherwood, jsherwood@ppa.com

Senior Editor Amanda Arnold, aarnold@ppa.com

Art Director / Production Manager Debbie Todd, dtodd@ppa.com

Editor-at-Large Jeff Kent, jkent@ppa.com

Contributing Editor Ellis Vener

Director of Sales & Strategic Alliances Kalia Bonner, kbonner@ppa.com, (404) 522-8600 x248

Western Region Sales Brian Sisco, bsisco@ppa.com, (404) 522-8600 x230

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PPA MEMBER SERVICES

Professional Photographers of America, csc@ppa.com, ppa.com, (800) 786-6277

EDITORIAL OFFICES

Professional Photographer, 229 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 2300, Atlanta, GA 30303-1608 U.S.A., (404) 522-8600

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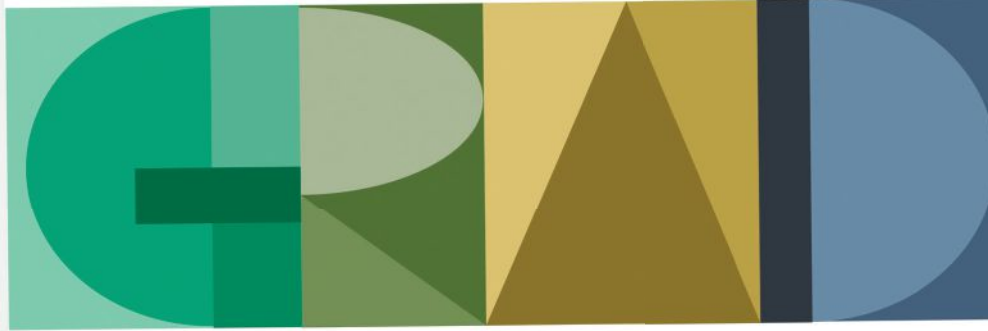
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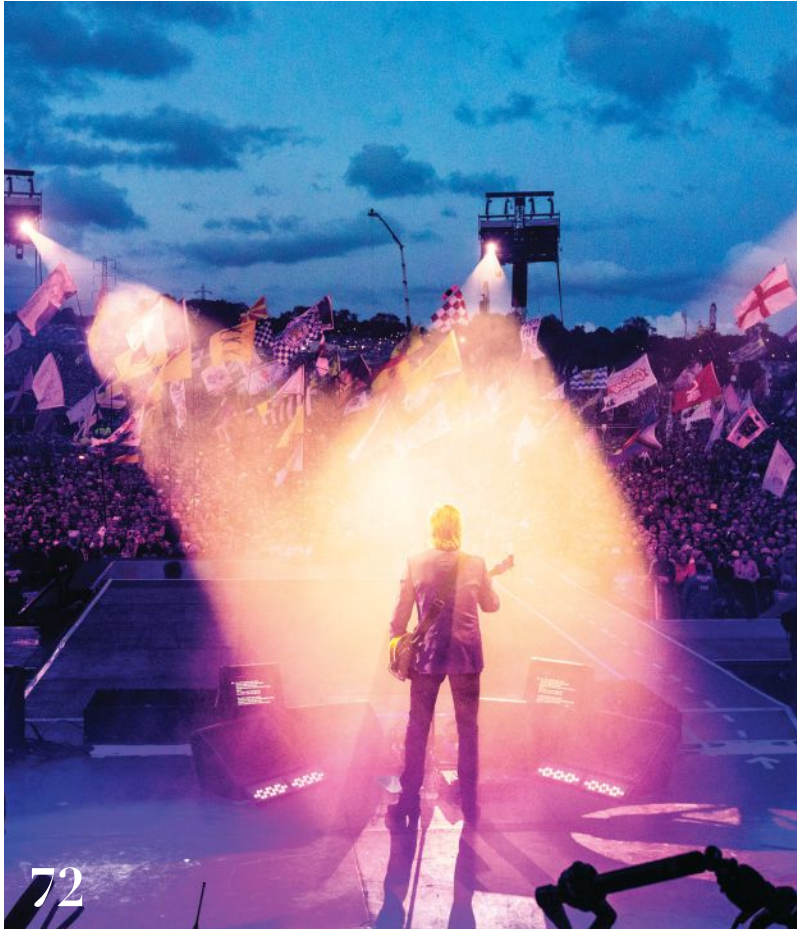
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©HUIBO HOU



© MJ KIM

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Knowing When To Stop

EVERYTHING IS TEMPORARY

Although the American Psychological Association defines midlife as spanning the ages of 36 to 64, I don't know a single person who's lived to 128. Having acknowledged the reality that we're closer to the end than the middle, my husband and I have undertaken Operation Deep Clean—combing the nooks and crannies of our home to declutter and thereby alleviate the inevitable work that will fall to our children someday. We've rediscovered childhood treasures, found files we should have discarded decades ago, and stumbled on mementoes that made us cry. I've unearthed memories of people who were so important to me that I thought I'd know them forever but whose names I now barely recall. Their impermanence in my life has made them no less consequential to it, but those relationships had concluded. They didn't end dramatically or badly; they were simply complete.

Projects and tasks have a natural ending. But for more boundless enterprises—relationships, hobbies, work—I've come to embrace this idea of completeness. It's not giving up, it's being satisfied in having done the right amount. It recognizes that time is not infinite. To partake of new relationships and challenges, I have to loosen my grasp on other things, sometimes things I very much enjoy and even those I've been doing so long they are part of my identity. My ability to embrace the undiscovered is founded on my willingness to stop engaging in some of these other very pleasant things. My time, space, and attention are limited.

The world is big, and our options for how we live in it are vast. If we each had 128 good years, life would still be too short to taste but a few of its flavors. We can't devote ourselves to everything all at once, so something's got to give. There's power in allowing yourself to say, *My effort on this is complete. I can devote my energy elsewhere.*

Our culture prizes the quitters-never-win ideal. But stopping doesn't equal losing. In fact, it might be the necessary ingredient to your next success. Continuing to do the same thing in the name of not giving up is a path to stagnation. From time to time, we find ourselves in need of refreshment, and that may require deeming something complete so we can carve out space for novel endeavors.

This is to say that my work here is done. Literally. A new season of life calls me: retirement. It's been a pleasure and a privilege to shepherd this magazine for the past 12 years and to know I've been part of something consequential to you and your profession. I'll miss the people and the work terribly. It's been pure joy to be shoulder to shoulder with a publications team who cares so much, knows so much, and does so much, so well.

But everything is temporary. And so, while for decades it seemed I'd be an editor forever, I find I am complete in this regard. Keep navigating your dreams and adjusting your sails to catch fresh winds that will take you to your next destination. •

Jane Gaboury
 Director of Publications



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FOREGROUND

By Amanda Arnold

Mirrored Abstraction

PATIENCE PAYS

It's hard to tell at first glance, but Mike Curry's "Fleeting Reflections" series are images of reflections captured on the surface of the water at London's bustling Canary Wharf. Curry

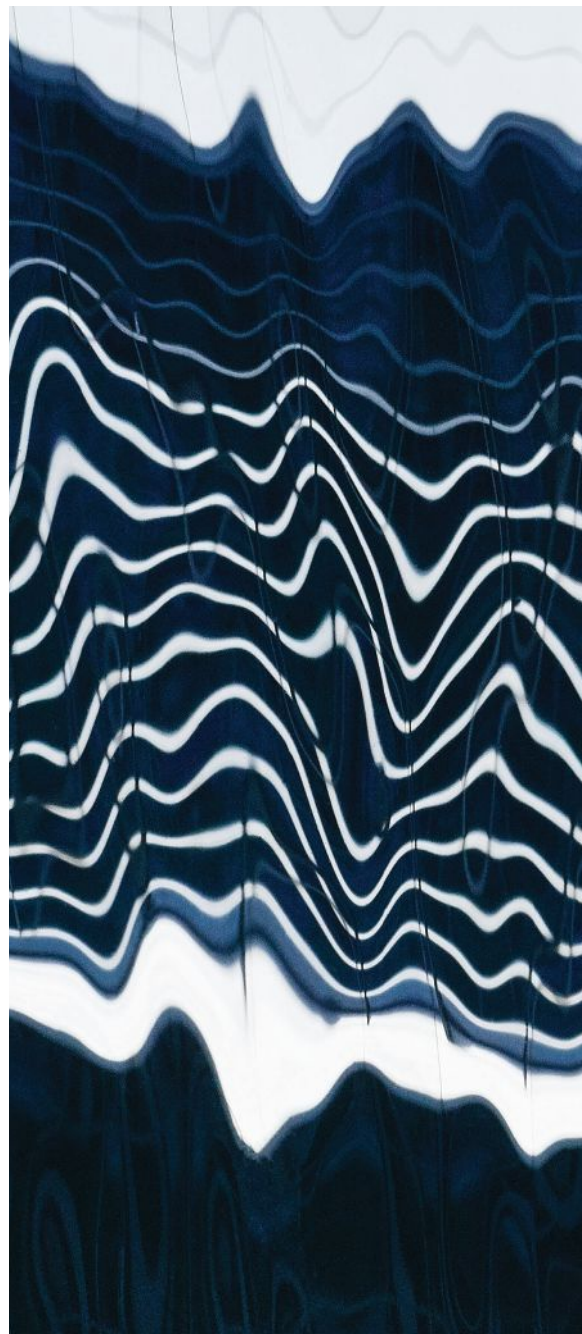
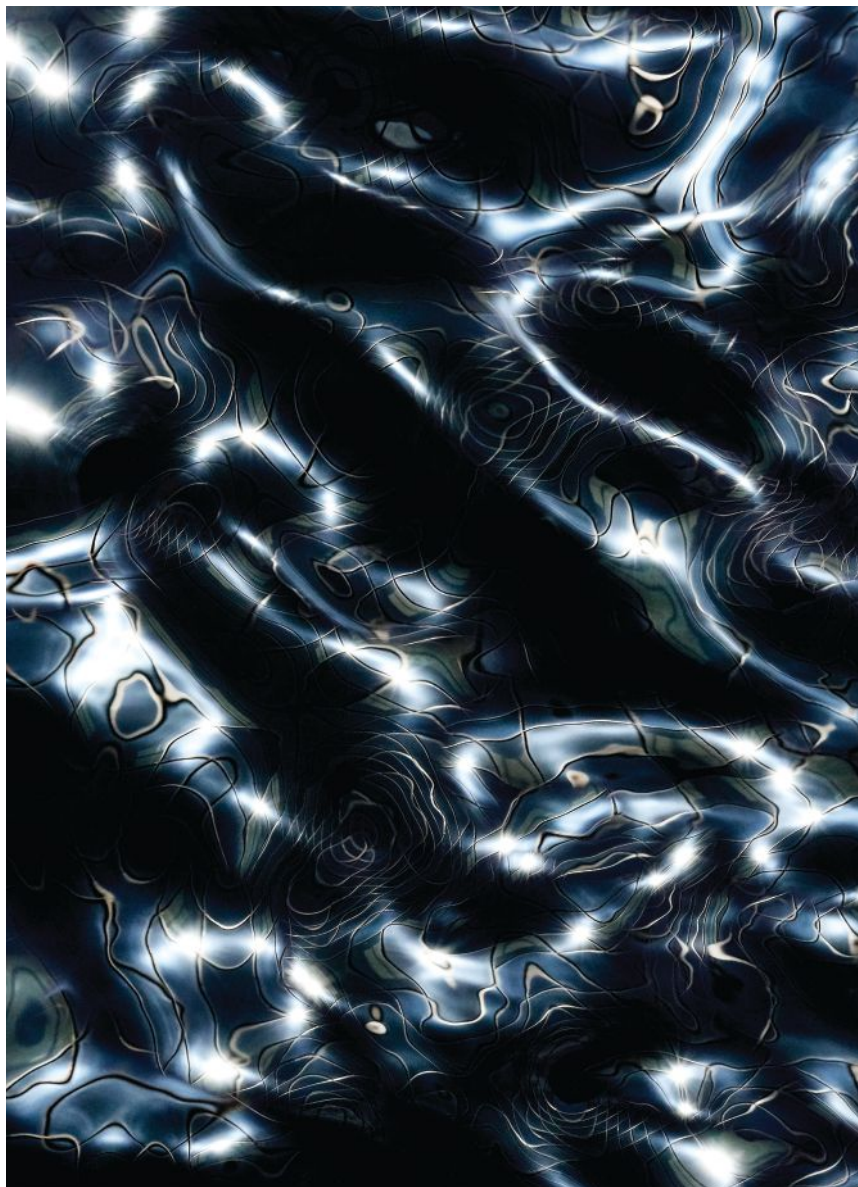
was photographing the area's sleek skyscrapers for Canary Wharf Group when he was drawn to the water at the urban center's edge. He appreciated how its rippling surface altered

the angular lines of the buildings it reflected. Those reflections reminded him of the kaleidoscopic patterns he'd loved as a kid, he explains. "I tried one capture, and when I

saw the results on the camera LCD, I was hooked."

The patterns his camera captures with a fast shutter speed are often not visible to the naked eye, he says—they are,

IMAGES ©MIKE CURRY / mikecurryphotography.com



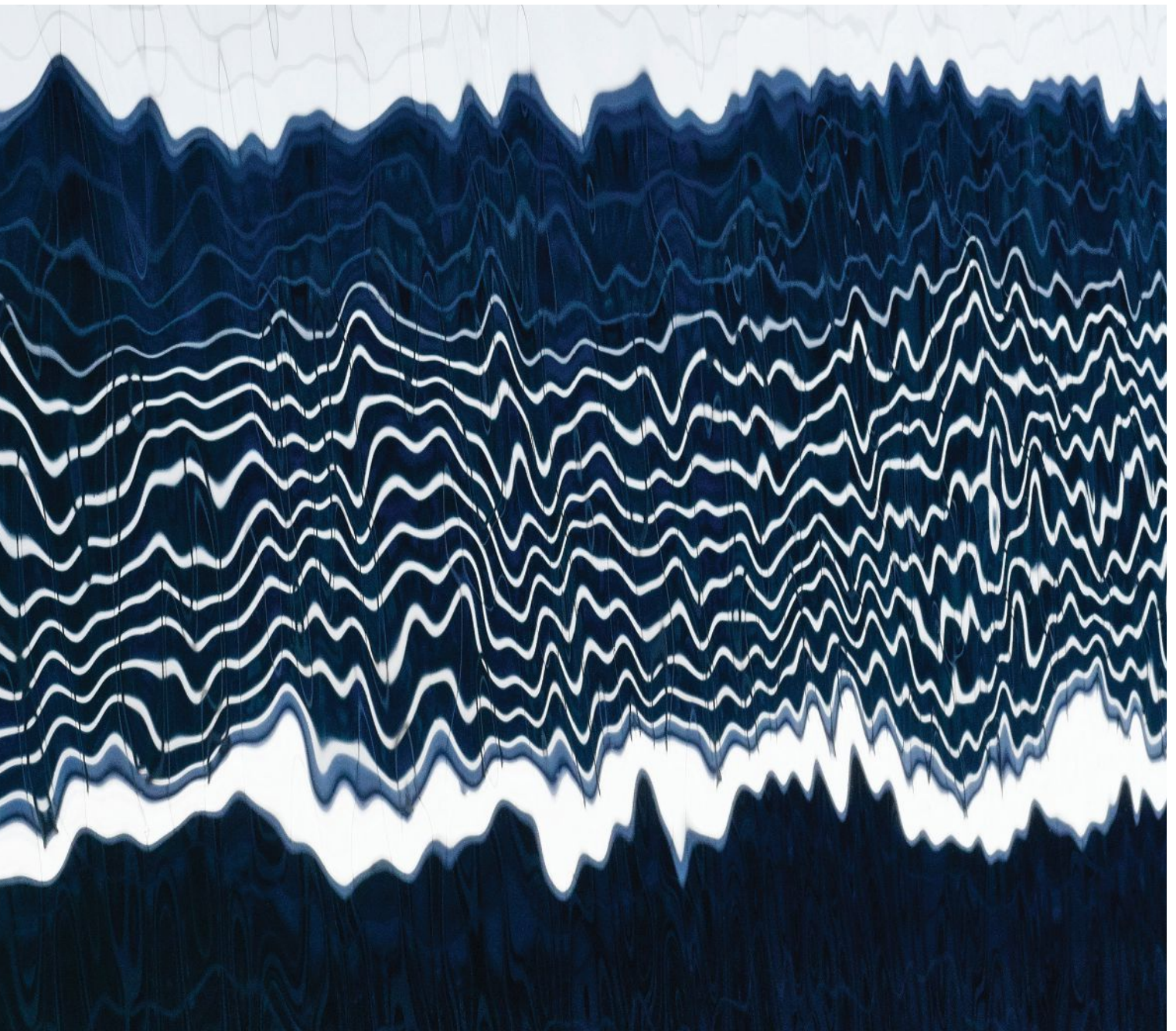
in fact, fleeting. That means getting one image that pleases him can take as many as a thousand captures, with the camera set to triple exposure for each capture, and three to

four hours shooting the same small segment of water.

“It takes a bit of experimentation to find a suitable area of water,” he adds. Once he’s found a spot, Curry

experiments with test shots, refining the camera’s settings, perhaps by reducing the exposure compensation, to bring out the patterns. He describes the process as

meditative and notes that he once made 999 captures for the perfect image. “For those four hours I had not a care in the world, and it was so relaxing,” he says. •



Mom-and-Pop Joy

QUINTESSENTIAL NEW YORK



IMAGES © JAMES AND KARLA MURRAY / jamesandkarlamurray.com



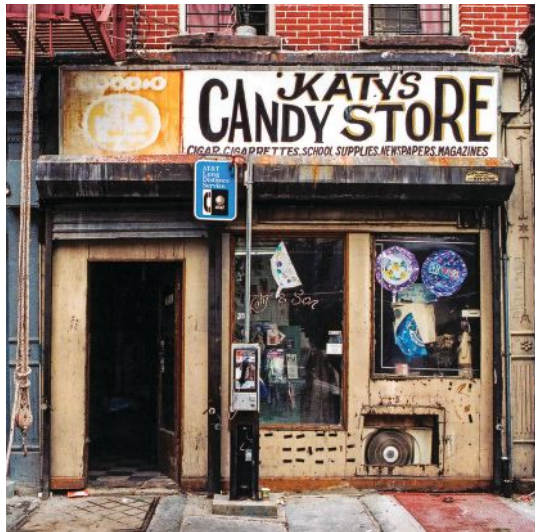
They were in search of graffiti art but fell in love with documenting something else—New York City’s mom-and-pop storefronts. As New York architectural and interior photographers James and Karla Murray explored Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx in the late 1990s photographing wall murals and interviewing artists, they also made photographs of the burroughs’ quaint storefronts, marveling at the neon signs and curlicue lettering, and chatting—sometimes for hours—with the stores’ longtime owners.

The images were “a labor of love for ourselves,” they say, with no intended publication. But when their book editor visited their home and noticed a storefront image on their wall, he had other ideas: This should be a book, he told them, asking if they had more photos. They had shoeboxes full, they replied, as well as micro cassette tapes of their conversations with the shop owners. They published a first book featuring 10 years’ worth of selected images and recently a follow-up with additional storefronts and some updated images of formerly photographed stores, “Store Front NYC: Photographs of the City’s Independent Shops, Past and Present” (Prestel).

Even though they describe their process as spontaneous and exploratory, they did set some ground rules from the beginning that would ensure stylistic continuity. For the most part, the photos would not contain people; the store’s front was the hero

and a person would distract the viewer. Plus, a person's clothing would inevitably date the photograph. They avoided photographing parking meters and vehicles. If cars or trucks were an impediment, they took note of the area's parking rules to determine a time when fewer cars might be present. All photos, whether film or digital, were made with a 35mm lens.

"We pretty much can say we've walked almost every street in New York City," says Karla, documenting historic family businesses over 30 years that they fear may one day disappear. "It started out as a labor of love, but it continued, as the joy of finding these stores and speaking to the owners was very rewarding for us." •



5 PERSONAL BRANDING MISTAKES

1. Being too generic. Avoid one-size-fits-all techniques.
2. Being fake. Don't focus on what you think clients want to hear. Be yourself.
3. Thinking it's just about a logo. Your brand encompasses all aspects of your business.
4. Remaining stagnant. It's natural to outgrow your original branding, so allow it to evolve with you.
5. Being inconsistent. Don't try to be one person on LinkedIn and another in a live conversation. •

Source: Sally Hogshead, howtofascinate.com

LISTEN UP

Being an active listener is an undervalued but necessary trait for creatives, according to *Inc.* magazine. How will you innovate new ways to meet clients' needs and exceed their expectations if you aren't listening to them and reading between the lines? "Listening is not about doing what

someone tells you to do. It's not the same as waiting to talk. It's not passive. Listening is active. It's about having your ear to the ground, understanding the forces around you, and reading subtext," Jan Jacobs and Leo Premutico, who run creative agency Johannes Leonardo, told *Inc.* •



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WEEDING OUT THE FAKES

With artificial intelligence at everyone's fingertips, it's becoming harder to tell whether an image captures real events or is a computer-generated fabrication. Camera manufacturers are developing technology that will embed digital signatures in images, verifying they are the real deal, according to the Nikkei Asia website. Nikon, Sony Group, and Canon are among the companies developing the technology for their equipment. Embedded tamper-proof signatures on images will note the date and time they were made as well as the location and the photographer who took them. Canon and Sony are collaborating with global news outlets to develop tools to help the media vet press images quickly for their legitimacy. •

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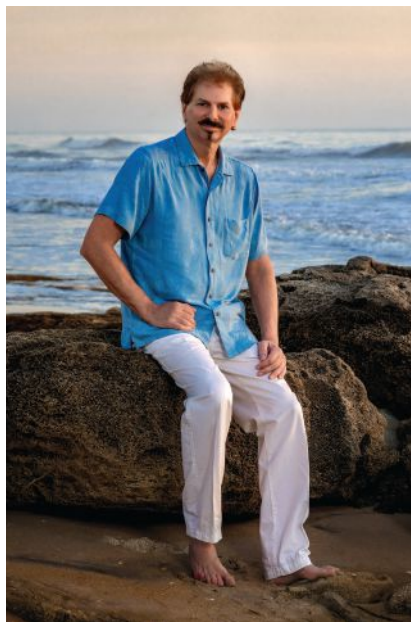


MADE WITH PRIDE
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Never Give Up

THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

By Mark Campbell, M.Photog.Cr., CPP, API



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Did you ever wonder why some people are successful at what they do while others struggle? We tend to think it's because successful people have a special formula or that they're born with talents some of us don't have.

While there may be some truth to that, the real answer is usually simpler: They don't give up. When a successful person has an idea, they stick with it, refuse to take no for an answer, or keep trying new ways to not fail. Failure is not the end of the road; it's inevitable and it's a learning experience. Thomas Edison said he didn't fail 1,000 times at creating a light bulb. He merely found 1,000 ways it wouldn't work before he discovered one that did. In fact, there's only one time where you actually fail at something. It's when you quit.

There are famous examples of how failure led to success. Stephen King's novel "Carrie" was rejected 30 times before it was accepted by Doubleday. Henry Ford's first two automobile companies went bankrupt. Walt Disney was fired from his newspaper job for lack of good ideas. He then started an animation company that quickly went bankrupt, and he ended up literally eating dog food to survive. Jim Carrey and Jerry Seinfeld were booed offstage during their first performances. The Beatles were turned down by nearly every record label and told they had no future in show business. A review of Fred Astaire said "Can't act. Can't sing. Slightly bald. Not handsome. Can dance a little." Colonel Sanders set out with his famous chicken recipe at the age of 65 with only a \$105 Social Security check to his name in an attempt to sell his franchise restaurant model. Over a thousand restaurants told him no before one finally said yes.

The moral of these examples is that if you have a good product or idea and

believe in yourself, others will too, eventually. But you have to have thick enough skin to get through the rejections. (That may ring a bell with folks who have experienced the drama of Merit Image Review critiques.)

It's a tendency of human beings to believe we're not good enough and that we can't succeed in ways we feel are important. The truth is that we fear failure and rejection so much that we can talk ourselves out of anything, even a great idea. The ability to push past that doubt is often what differentiates those people we acknowledge as accomplished from everyone else.

Michael Jordan, arguably one of the best basketball players ever to play the game, was cut from his high school basketball team. He once said, "I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game-winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." He also said, "Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it or work around it."

Remember, we don't really fail at anything until we quit. Finding ways that something doesn't work or realizing we need a different approach isn't failure. It's how the success process works. But to give up on something we feel in our hearts is possible is to let our fear win. Life isn't easy, but it can be whatever we make of it. Keep your eyes on the prize, my friends. There's always light at the end of the tunnel. •

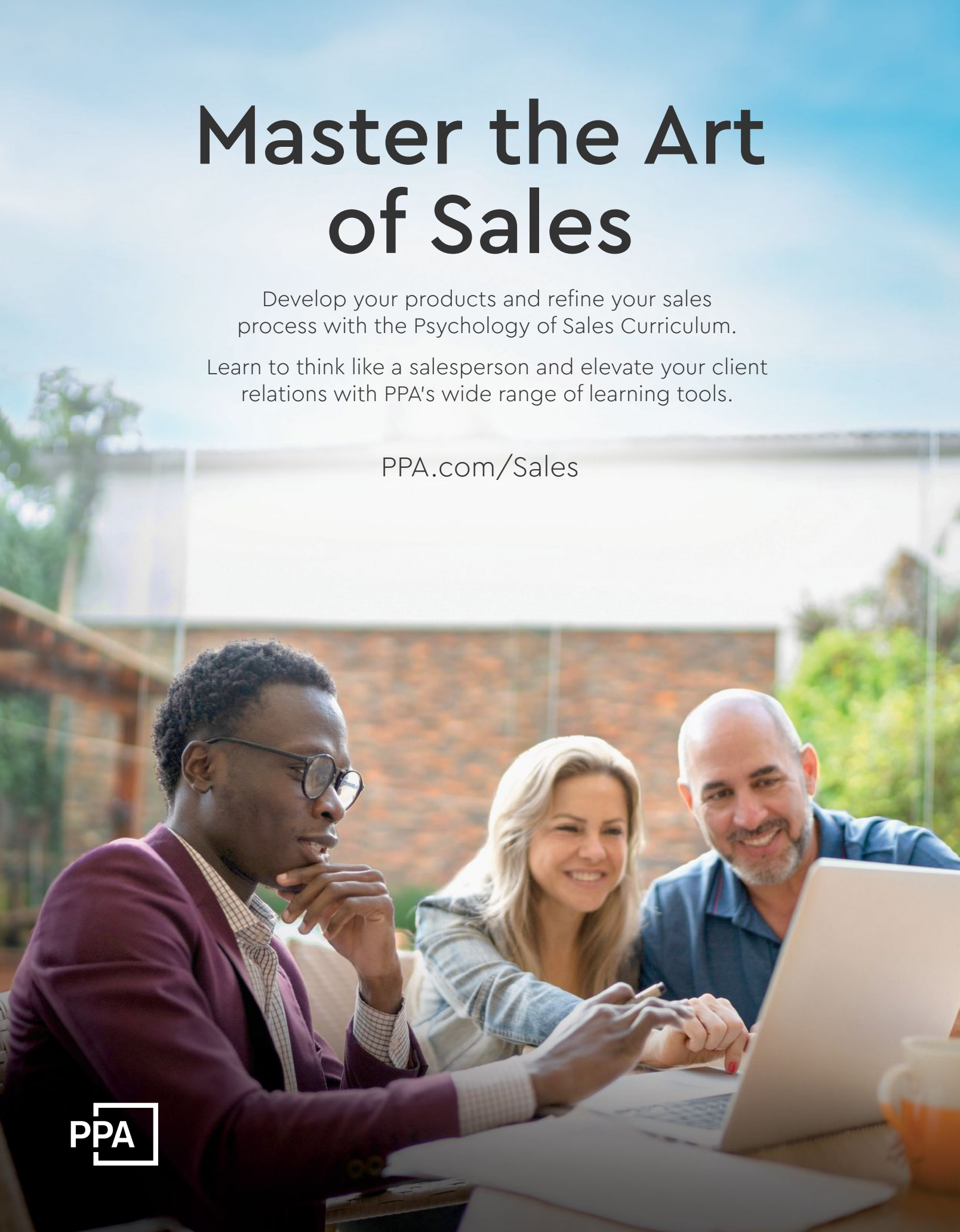
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Gravity

Heidi Margocsy

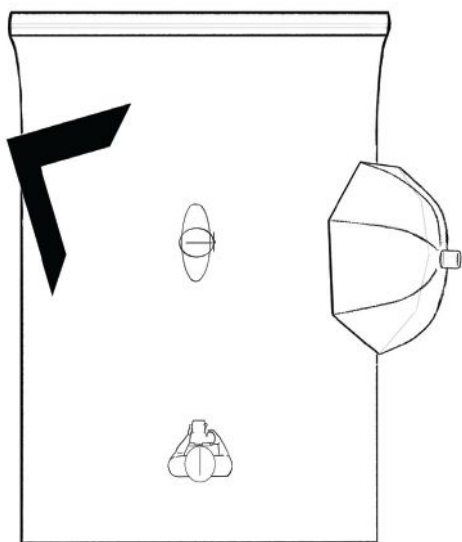
In Her Image Photography
Petaluma, California

CAMERA & LENS: Canon EOS R6, Canon RF50mm F1.2 L USM lens

EXPOSURE: 1/100 second at f/6.3, ISO 400

LIGHTING: A Flashpoint Xplor 600 with a Glow EZ Lock Octa 60-inch soft box camera right

POST-CAPTURE: Heidi Margocsy used Adobe Photoshop and Exposure software to process the image, lightly retouching the skin using dodge and burn to bring out the features while maintaining the integrity of the original. She worked with color balance to create a fine art tone and added slight vignetting to bring focus to the center of the image.



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NOTE: Lighting diagrams shown here are not to scale.

Showered With Blessings

Della Watters, M.Photog.M.Wed.Photog.M.Artist.Cr., CPP

WattersWorks & Company
Everett, Pennsylvania

CAMERA & LENS: Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS III USM lens

EXPOSURE: 1/400 second at f/5.6, ISO 125

LIGHTING: Natural light

POST-CAPTURE: Della Watters cropped and removed background distractions, changed the color of the mother's dress to be in harmony, and dodged and burned using Adobe Photoshop and Nik Viveza.



©DELLA WATTERS / wattersworks.com



©CAROLYN TEMPLE

Flamingo Finery

Carolyn Temple, M.Photog.Cr.

Coastal Image Photography
Morehead City, N.C.

CAMERA & LENS: Nikon D7100, Sigma APO 50-500mm F4.5-6.3 DG OS HSM lens

EXPOSURE: 1/200 second at f/11, ISO 1000

LIGHTING: Available light

POST-CAPTURE: Using Aperture, Adobe Lightroom, and Adobe Photoshop, Carolyn Temple digitally corrected tone and brightness. She reduced noise with Topaz Denoise and improved the sharpness with Topaz Sharpen.



©COREY MCDONALD PORTRAIT ARTIST / coreymcdonaldphotography.com

The Victor

Corey McDonald, M.Photog.M.Artist.Cr., CPP

Corey McDonald Portrait Artist
Monroeville, Alabama

CAMERA & LENS: Nikon Z8, Sigma 105mm F1.4 DG HSM Art lens

EXPOSURE: 1/125 second at f/8, ISO 100

LIGHTING: Corey McDonald used two strip boxes behind the subject and a beauty dish on a stand for the main light directly above and in front of the subject.

POST-CAPTURE: He used Adobe Photoshop for dodging and burning and a layer of paint over each of the elements.

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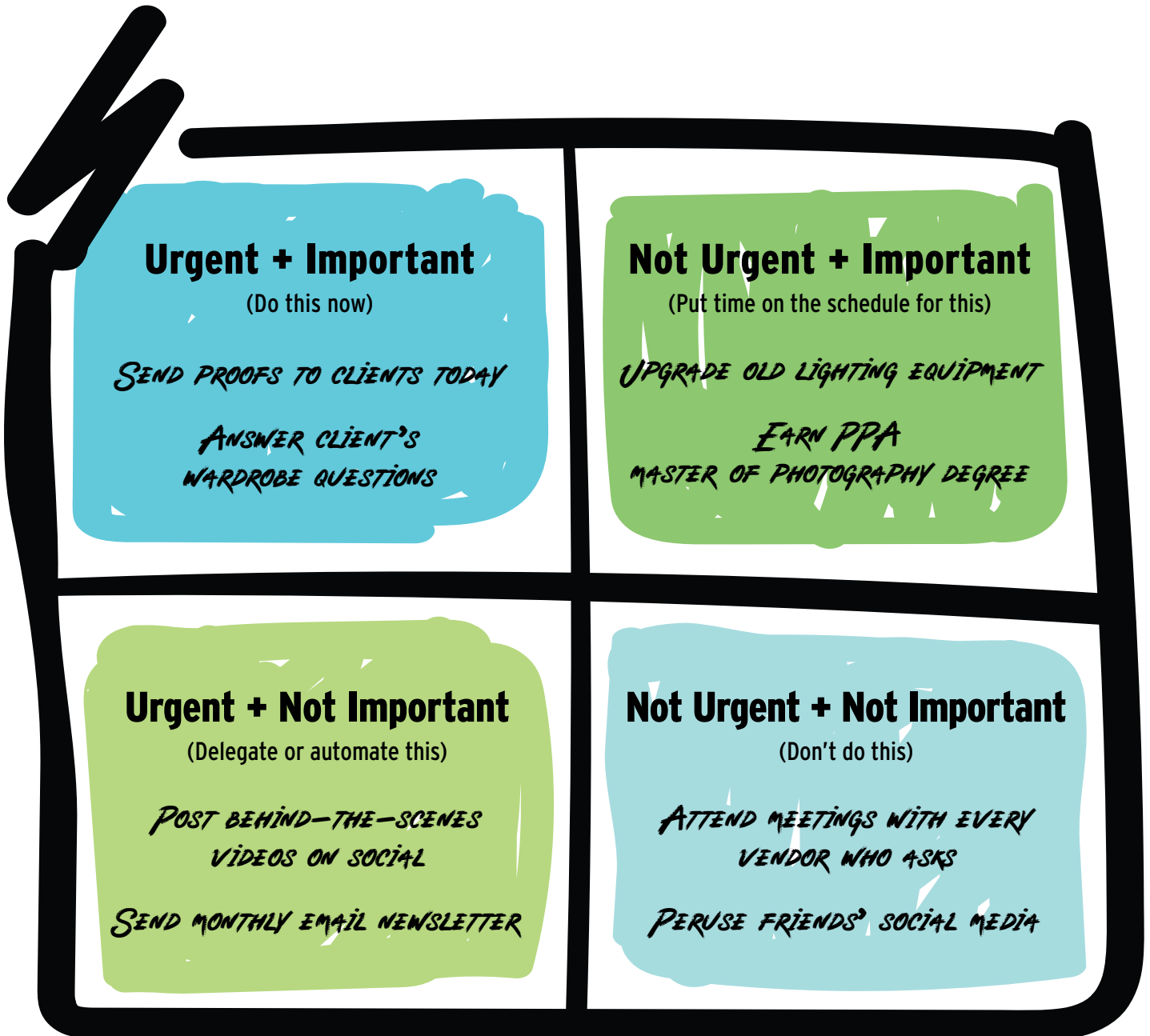


SUCCESS

Feeling Overwhelmed?

When you have many tasks on your plate, it can be difficult to decide what to tackle first. Here's a tip to help you prioritize: Write each task in one of the four quadrants of an Eisenhower matrix you've drawn on paper. Urgent tasks are time sensitive, and important tasks are

paramount to the health of your business. Once you've identified the most urgent and important tasks, you'll know where to start. And maybe it will be easier to see that those not urgent, not important items don't need to be done at all. •



Adaptability Means Sustainability

STAYING ON TREND IN THE SENIOR MARKET

By Jeff Kent

IMAGES © KIA BONDURANT / bondurantstudios.com



In the world of senior portrait photography, change is standard. For photographers who want to appeal to a new class of (let's face it, highly opinionated) consumers, staying relevant means staying ahead of the competition and the trends.

Kia Bondurant, M.PhotoG. Cr., is keenly aware of this reality. The Kansas City portrait photographer has made a living by continually evolving her studio, her marketing, and her brand positioning to meet the changing needs of an evolving clientele. This isn't just an effort to stay on trend; it's a calculated business decision that impacts everything from her communication strategy to the products she offers.

"One of the things I love about the senior market is it's new every year," she says. "You can't just set it and forget it. You have to pay attention to the fashion trends and what's popular in terms of the backgrounds and the outfits and the poses. These are the buying trends. If you understand what people like, you can better understand what they're going to buy."

To keep up with shifting tastes in the senior market for both seniors and their parents, Bondurant recommends a steady diet of research, including a handful of essential activities:

- **Find a muse with a clue.** It's helpful to have someone in your life who knows what

appeals to high school seniors and other teenagers. If you're well beyond this age group, no problem. Talk to your kids or friends' kids, relatives, younger photo assistants—anyone who's plugged into that market.

- **Be social.** Look at social media, especially the platforms that are popular with your clients. Bondurant finds Instagram to be an aspirational platform where teens and young adults share looks they're striving for. Keep in mind that you're using social media as a research tool, not entertainment.

- **Log some screen time.** Watch what teens are watching, including music videos, and stay current on fashion in TV shows. See what the luminaries of the under-20 set are wearing and what's trending.

- **Read print.** Editors at the iconic fashion magazines still have their thumb on the pulse of high style, and these glossies can be useful for keeping tabs on current and upcoming fashion trends.

- **Do a deep dive.** Make fashion and style research a regular part of your work, and go deep. Delve into your sources and pay attention to the throughlines that connect different styles or movements. Take notes and use the information you gather to help plan for the next season.

BUILDING IN FASHION

To be flexible in the way she

presents her senior portrait business, Bondurant runs a sub-brand aimed at teen girls called Style Muse Magazine. Style Muse Magazine started as a model program she ran in conjunction with a local women's boutique.

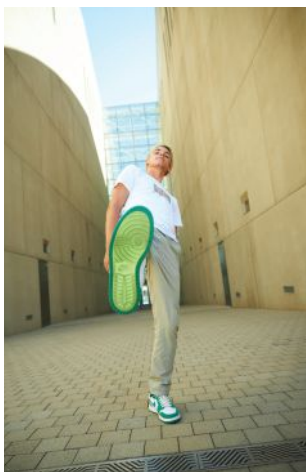
Every summer, Bondurant provided models chosen from her senior portrait applicants with a fashion show at the boutique. She photographed the event and did mini sessions with each model. These shoots could get elaborate, with oodles of accessories, hair and make-up prep—the works. When the girls got hold of the resulting images, they shared them all over social media, and the event quickly became Bondurant's main form of advertising. The program evolved into a semi-independent entity, with special mini sessions she now calls media days. Bondurant runs the sub-brand on Instagram so she can continually update the images and fluidly change the looks she wants to portray for each season.

EXPANDING THE MARKET

To broaden her clientele and generate more bookings during traditionally slow times, Bondurant recently introduced two new product lines as spin-offs from her girl-focused senior portrait program.

Guy lines. While Style Muse Magazine is for senior girls, Bondurant runs a more tradi-





tional senior portrait campaign for boys through her main brand, Bondurant Studios. For guy-focused portraits, she markets more to the parents versus direct appeals to the girls through social media. To get the senior boy portraits going, she reached out to parents of former clients to let them know she offers a program for boys.

“It’s all about letting the moms know we are working with boys,” she says. “They are the drivers for these sessions, not the boys.”

Bondurant typically does these sessions later in the year, after her Style Muse sessions wrap up, which has helped fill a formerly dead time on her calendar. In her first year doing the portraits with the boys, she added about 20 additional sessions that became some of her highest grossing. “The moms are usually so excited to get these images of their boys that they buy our biggest packages,” she says.

Teens and tweens. Similar to the boy senior portraits, Bondurant wanted to expand to a tangential market that could help fill a slow time in her schedule. Again, she reached out to parents of former clients to offer sessions for younger teens and tweens. While speaking to some of the parents, she struck on the theme of confidence, which resonated with them.

“Parents of kids this age just want to build them up,” she says. “It’s a tough time, and it can be awkward, especially for girls who are still trying to figure out who they want

to be. So, confidence was the key, and we really focus on building confidence through these sessions and these images because what parent wouldn't pay for their kid to feel really confident in themselves?"

Bondurant created packages with slightly discounted pricing and different product options that work with this age group, such as quote books that build on the confidence theme. She was able to add 20 sessions during what had been a slow time. An added benefit: The teen and tween bookings represent an ideal feeder program for the senior portrait program.

The combination of these two additional lines of business led to a 25% increase in revenue the year they were introduced, not to mention dozens of new clients with all the associated potential for referrals and repeat business.

CHANGE IS ESSENTIAL

"Change is happening all around us, all the time," Bondurant says. "And the biggest reason I see people not succeed when change happens is that they don't do anything about it."

Have those difficult conversations with yourself, she urges. Look at your numbers. Try to understand the deeper meaning behind the numbers and think about how you can adapt what you're doing for better results. Most of all, take action.

"Shoot and connect with people about what you're doing," says Bondurant. "Invite them in. That's what this is all about." •



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1. Yearly Theme: Maternity

2. Boudoir

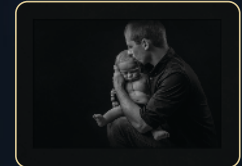
3. Children/Teens

4. Commercial

5. Day-of-Wedding

6. High School Senior

7. Illustrative Portrait



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© Kenzie Hunter Hokanson

8. Illustrative/Digital Art

9. Landscape

10. Natural Portrait

11. Newborn



© Jerry Venz



© Kenneth Richard

12. Pets and Domestic Animals

13. Portrait Groups/Families

14. Reportage/Photojournalism

15. Sports

16. Wildlife



© Douglas Bennett



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© Jie Fischer



© David Soldano



© Megan Drane

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Monetizing Social Events

UNLOCKING A LUCRATIVE EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY NICHE

By Jeff Kent

IMAGES ©STEVE FOISY / partypics.com



SOCIAL EVENT GEAR BAG

For consistent results, Foisy recommends bringing a standard kit for every event.

- Digital camera body
- 18-40mm lens
- 24-70mm lens
- Speedlight or similar off-camera flash
- Flip bracket to keep the flash over the lens and reduce side shadows
- Tablet tethered to camera



Social event photography presents a potentially profitable market for photographers of all stripes, including those who've never photographed events before. Different from typical event photography, social event photography focuses solely on the attendees of an event. You're not photographing the decor or the keynote speaker or the celebrity guest of honor; you're photographing the guests and generating income from creating fun images of people having a good time.

Steve Foisy started photographing social events in 1981 as a student at the University of Georgia. Since those early days clicking the shutter at fraternity and sorority parties, he's homed in on a proven formula for making money photographing events, which photographers can do as a profitable sideline, dive into full time, or even contract out to associate photographers to cover large events. Today, Foisy works as head of photography for Candid Color Systems, TSS Photography, and Party Pics, where he coaches photographers who work at hundreds of events each year. "There are a lot more social events out there than people realize," he says. "There's huge potential. This niche is also something you could use to fill the gaps in your schedule."

PRIORITIZING PERSONALITY

Success in social event photography hinges on personality. Social event photographers need to be outgoing and adept at approaching people, engaging them efficiently, and guiding them through a series of quick photographs. "Personality is critical," says Foisy. "We would rather hire the personality and teach them how to shoot good pictures than hire a great technician who can't work with people."

Personality is crucial because social event photography is a fast-moving enterprise that requires capturing multiple

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images per minute and then connecting each subject with galleries of pictures taken of them throughout the event, all while maintaining a positive approach that helps people enjoy themselves.

PROFIT FORMULA

The logistics of running social event photography gigs are relatively simple.

Collect data. Foisy suggests setting up a station at the entrance to the event, where attendees can upload their selfie, mobile number, and email to an app used to receive links to their images. If that's not an option, photographers can enter this information as they photograph, which dramatically slows down the shooting pace in the early stages of the event but allows photographers to pair individuals with their contact info as they work.

Take lots of quality images. Foisy recommends capturing 120 to 150 images per hour, which works out to a little more than two photographs per minute.

Match images to contact data. Using event photography software is invaluable for this step. Foisy uses Now Candid, which employs facial recognition to match images to guest information he acquires at the beginning of the event.

Build personal image galleries. Event photography software also allows you to build galleries quickly for each individual with all the images matched to their contact info.

Send links to galleries. Send the galleries to the provided mobile numbers during the event while guests are excited. Mobile is much quicker than email. If they receive the galleries while still interacting with other guests, there's a higher likelihood they'll share the images and encourage others to view their galleries.

Take online orders. Using the software's order-fulfillment features, process the image orders you receive.





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AIMING FOR SUCCESS

Speed and quality are the names of the game. At the same time, social event photographers should endeavor to make the process seamless, allowing attendees to relax, enjoy the event, and subsequently help generate more compelling photographs. A few steps can make the process efficient and repeatable.

Staff up. Make sure you're adequately staffed. Foisy recommends one photographer for every 100 attendees at an event. If you're photographing a prom with 500 expected attendees, five social event photographers should cover it.

Encourage, don't ask. Never ask if you can take a photo. Too many people feign modesty, even if they really want the photo. Instead, politely encourage guests to gather for a photo by saying something like, "Hi there, let's get together for a quick picture."

Be action oriented. Approach guests with action-oriented directives, and role play different posing scenarios with them to break the ice and demonstrate how they can present themselves.

Capture in camera. Photographs go into the galleries as captured, with no time for post-capture production, so they need to be well composed, exposed, and posed.

Standardize your captures. Foisy urges establishing standard capture protocols that include settings for different groups. For example, to photograph two people he uses a vertical composition with his lens at 35mm from about five feet away. He frames the subjects from the belt up with about a hand's width of space above the tallest person's head. For a group of three, he switches to horizontal from five feet away. With a group of four, he takes a step back and photographs horizontally from seven feet away. Sticking to this formula at every event speeds up the photography and yields more consistent results.

Predefine the settings. There isn't time to fumble with exposure settings for each image. Try presetting your camera to allow for faster capture when photographing within typical ranges. Foisy typically uses:

- ISO 800-1600
- 5,600K or auto white balance
- Program mode
- TTL on a speedlight

WHAT'S IT WORTH?

Take the 500-person prom example. If each of the five photographers covering the event captures 120 images per hour, and the event lasts three hours, that's 360 images per photographer or 1,800 total pictures. At an average baseline value of \$2 per image (an average minimum across different areas and types of events), that's a minimum expected sale of \$3,600. And that's just the baseline potential. Foisy cited examples of social event photographers at high-profile events where total sales topped \$30,000 for a three-hour event.

GETTING STARTED

To identify prospective clients, Foisy suggests researching upcoming galas, charity events, festivals, and high school events, and then contacting the organizers. Event venues are a great source of business, as they usually like to populate their recommended vendor lists with trusted local photographers. You can build goodwill by offering to photograph the venue's decor at the events you photograph and provide those images to the venue for free.

When contacting prospective clients, you don't need a marketing kit; a business card with a link to an online gallery of sample images works in most cases. Just take the first step and start the process, urges Foisy. "So often, people delay because they want to get everything ready, or they use that as an excuse. Just get started. Find the people you need to talk to, start the conversation, and begin building the relationships." •

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THE GOODS

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Stretching Conventions

The quality of light includes a range from soft to hard that can enhance the story of an image. Conventional thought is that hard light is used to show a strength or toughness often associated with masculinity, and soft light is suited for more gentle or feminine subjects and to create more forgiving and flattering portrait light.

The smaller a light source in relation to a subject, the harder the light will be. The larger the light source in relation to a subject, the softer the light will be. Once you've mastered the techniques to manipulate the variables that affect light quality, using positioning and diffusers to control the range of hard to soft, you can push the conventions when needed to enhance the story you want to tell.

In these examples from PPA's Imaging Excellence Collection, each subject exudes aspects of strength, though they are all photographed using soft light techniques. •

©JIM DWYER



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Looking Great in Less Time

REVIEW: EVOTO

By Betsy Finn, M.Photog.Cr.



Evoto's complete retouch for blemishes and skin tone unevenness is impressive, though perhaps a little too perfect for most clients' taste.

Retouching can be time consuming and therefore costly to your business. Since we all want to improve the bottom line, it's worthwhile to consider using artificial intelligence as a tool to help make the job easier and more time efficient. Evoto is an AI photo editing software and retouching tool that could make a significant impact on your post-production life.

Evoto is unique in its pricing model and ability to sync AI edits across different photos. You can create presets to save time and then apply those presets to multiple images. You can create presets for individuals that will be applied and synced across the range of images you're editing. The software has a lot of features, but I'll concentrate on those that will be most useful for a retouching workflow.

ENHANCING WORKFLOW

In the facial recognition and retouching feature, Evoto, like many AI retouching programs, identifies the perceived gender and age category of the subjects. Seniors and children are not assigned gender. I uploaded a large family portrait grouping to see how Evoto would handle 20 faces, as AI software sometimes struggles with large groups. Evoto correctly identified the gender and age category for all subjects.

The software makes these distinctions so you can create different presets based on genders and ages if that serves your purpose. You might decide to retouch acne, fix skin tones, and brighten eyes for all of the younger subjects. And you could choose to soften wrinkles or downplay double chins for the adults. You can also add digital makeup such as lipstick, eye shadow, and accentuated eyelashes.

Evoto includes reshaping tools that let you to remove double chins, slim necks, adjust arms and hips, and change subjects' heights. Here is where you want to make sure you're following clients' wishes for alteration with their specific permis-



The AI function detects faces within groups and assigns a perceived gender and age. You can create presets that will be applied to one or all of these groups over a selection of photos. Additionally, settings can be tweaked for a specific individual and synced across the same photos.

sion. Tread carefully with body contouring edits and keep in mind that your images can impact others' self-image. Just because you can use Evoto's Body Reshape feature doesn't mean you should. Venture into discussing reshaping only if a client specifically requests this service.

Evoto has image features that include auto white balance, white balance selection, watermarking, noise reduction, background replacement, and more. There are tools to perform healing and liquifying within the program, as well. I found the clean backdrop feature useful, as some of the canvas backdrops in my studio have creases and scuffs from being used over

the years. I could see some of the included features being useful for wedding photographers to output a proofing gallery with light general enhancements applied or for anyone to do a full retouch with minimal need for external editing in Photoshop. Many of the features would be practical for yearbook photos, business headshots, and sports and dance photos, too.

The software's ability to remove blemishes and even out skin tones is stellar, and I appreciate the auto teeth and eye detection. Evoto's AI does an excellent job of selecting these facial features, and it's great to bring out a little more sparkle in the eyes, something I used to accom-

plish through dodge and burn manually, back in the day. I have a number of clients asking for their teeth to be whitened slightly, so this saves me time when rendering a set of images from a session.

You can maintain a natural look with Evoto depending on the edits you're trying to pull off. Some of the features are a little less authentic looking. I typically avoid digital makeup, as my goal is to portray clients as they are.

TIME SAVINGS

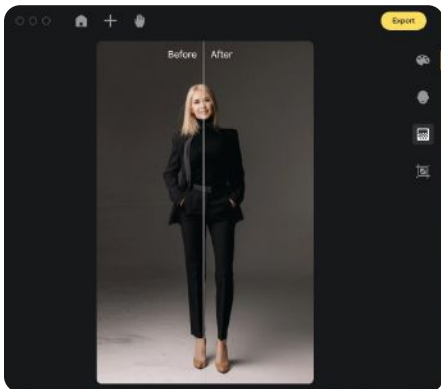
Over the course of a year, using Evoto has saved me hours of editing time. What I used to have to retouch manually, I can



Background replacement is another handy Evoto feature.



Note that the Evoto skin retouches extend to cover the low neckline area. Some retouching software will do only faces.



The clean backdrop function comes in handy if yours are starting to show scuffs.

COURTESY EVOTO

now let AI do, though I still review all images and fine-tune them as needed. I appreciate that Evoto allows you to soft edit an entire set of images so you don't have to wait for the presets to be rendered at full clarity on an image-by-image basis. This feature allows me to prepare the adjustments for my images quickly, make manual adjustments on a case-by-case basis, and go for a coffee break while Evoto's AI gets to work rendering and ex-

porting an entire set of images. You'll need to consider the time investment involved with using Evoto for your own workflow, of course, but in my trials, I was able to replicate my manual retouching and save a lot of time.

Evoto can't sync with Adobe Lightroom, but I've figured out a manual work-around. I create a set of TIFF files within Lightroom, then import them into Evoto for retouching. After I export the re-

touched files, I put them into the original folder, overwriting the unedited TIFF files. Then my edits are ready for the rest of my Lightroom workflow.

PRICING

Evoto has an unusual pricing model. The plans range from 1,200 to 75,000 credits per year, and credits are deducted when final images are rendered, so you pay only for the retouched files you export from the program. If there's a dud in the batch, just don't export it. To break that down into useful numbers, consider a portrait photographer delivering 20 images each to 50 clients yearly, which would be 1,000 retouched images. The basic professional plan of 1,200 credits (around \$0.07 per image) would suffice. A wedding photographer who delivers 800 images per wedding with 25 weddings yearly would need up to 20,000 credits (around \$0.05 per image) depending on how many required Evoto edits.

Evoto allows you to import whatever number of images you like with no limit on the catalog size. If you render 20 images, Evoto will deduct 20 credits from your balance. Each image counts, but if you need to make adjustments and re-render an image, an additional credit is not deducted as long as it's re-rendered on the same computer.

Evoto has annual licensing plans based on the credits you'll need. Paid plans are good for one year and allow usage on two devices simultaneously. The basic professional plan is \$83.99 for 1,200 credits, followed by four additional tiers offering discounted rates based on the volume of credits needed. This pricing plan lets you pay based on the number of images you need to process, with per-image volume discounts increasing with each tier. For example, 3,600 credits is \$227.99, 9,000 credits is \$515.99, and 75,000 credits is \$3,499.99. You can get five free credits to try out the software at evoto.ai. •

Betsy Finn is a portrait artist in Dexter, Michigan.



© Jaden Giorgianni Photography

KIMBERLY KING

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The networking opportunities at Imaging USA and the hands-on classes with professionals have been a tremendous help to my business. I became a PPA member to gain knowledge and network with other professionals.

I love capturing candid moments of people living their lives. I also love the range of stories and the diversity in the articles of *Professional Photographer*.

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Honoring a Profound Bond

LEGACY PET SESSIONS

By Angela Lawson, M.Photog.Cr., CPP

©ANGELA LAWSON / agjphotography.net



I was recently reminded of why what I do for a living is so important in a very personal way. My dog Simba died unexpectedly. He was healthy one day and gone the next. Since he was just six years old, I'd thought I had plenty of time to get him back in the studio for updates to his puppy portraits. I was heartbroken not just because I lost one of my best friends but because I didn't get to capture the additional lasting visual memories of our life together that I had hoped for. This is one of the reasons I've spent years providing legacy sessions as one of my studio offerings.

Legacy sessions are designed to capture heartfelt moments shared between beloved pets and their owners, often during some of their final days together, whether it's a senior pet getting on in years or one who's received a terminal diagnosis. As a longtime professional pet photographer and having worked in veterinary assistance, animal rescue, and rehabilitation, I understand the profound bond between pets and their people. I have the ability to capture that unconditional love and create lasting tributes to our most loyal friends.

For many pet owners, legacy sessions provide comfort and closure, allowing them to say goodbye in a meaningful way. And by documenting some of the pet's unique quirks and personality traits as well as the relationship with their owners, the photos serve as a legacy of the pet, something their owners can

Some of the most powerful images come from unscripted moments that illustrate the special relationship between an owner and their pet. Capture a mix of candid moments along with posed images.



look back on and remember for years to come. I also offer legacy sessions for people and their healthy adult pets who want to capture memories of their companions while they can.

While a pet photographer tends to have a better understanding of pet photography techniques than photographers who photograph human subjects, don't rule out offering end-of-life sessions if you don't specialize in pets. If you're a professional photographer with a love for animals and can offer empathy and compassion during the session, you can provide this service to clients. Understand that it's a highly emotional time for the owners, and their pets may not be at their best. Here are some ways you can prepare for an end-of-life pet session.

Empathy and sensitivity: Approach the situation with empathy and be sensitive to the pet owner's feelings. Offer emotional support throughout the process, understanding that it's a difficult time, but be prepared to be affected as well. Showing that you also feel the emotional weight of these sessions will resonate with the owner. Keep it as professional as possible so they don't worry about the quality of the service you're providing.

Communication and consultation: Begin with a compassionate and empathetic conversation with the pet owner. Listen to their wishes, emotions, and specific ideas they have for the session. Discuss their expectations and particular poses





The International Society of Animal Photographers is a PPA Community Network association. Angela Lawson is an accredited professional of animal imagery through this association.
theisap.com

they want. Ask about the pet's personality and its story to learn something about its significance in the owner's life. Keep the lines of communication open and give the owner a clear timeline for when the images will be ready to view and when the order will be complete.

Location: The session can be in the pet's favorite spot at home or in a serene outdoor location that holds meaning for the pet and the owner. Studio sessions are feasible if the owner wants a more traditional portrait style and is confident the location won't be a stress on the pet.

Lighting and equipment: Use the appropriate camera, lenses, and lighting. Natural light can work, but I prefer supplemental lighting to ensure I get beautiful quality images no matter where I'm photographing.

Timing: Choose a time when the pet will be comfortable and relaxed. If you're planning to be outside, try to schedule in the morning or during the golden hour in early evening when the light is both softer and warmer.

Shot planning: Have a plan for getting the shots you discussed in the client consultation. Capture a mix of candid moments along with posed captures. Focus on the emotions of the pet owner and the bond between them and their pet. Some of the most powerful images come from candid moments that illustrate their special relationship. Stay alert, as those moments can sneak up on you.



Details: Focus on getting details that convey the pet's personality—their eyes, paws, a favorite toy or activity. These can be meaningful additions to the session.

Props and accessories: Incorporate props or accessories that hold significance to the pet and its owner such as favorite toys, blankets, or a special location. Be careful not to overdo it with too many items. Keep it simple so the focus is on emotion.

Patience: Pets may not always cooperate, so allow for breaks and time for the owner to comfort them. Provide accessibility aids for the pet to get up on chairs, benches, or couches, or make sure the owners can lift them if needed. Avoid excess handling and movement that could cause distress. Pets may be in pain and can't move like they used to.

The owner: Include the pet owner in some images even if they did not ask for it. I can't stress this enough. Their presence and interaction with the pet can be incredibly touching and will make the most powerful images. The owners will never regret being in images with their pet. If they don't take the opportunity, they will almost certainly regret it once the pet is gone.

Editing: After the session, edit the photos to maintain a natural and timeless look. Avoid filters that can make an image look dated in the future. The goal is to create photographs that will be cherished for years to come.

Presentation and delivery: Share the edited images with the client in a sensitive and respectful manner, especially if

the owner has had to say goodbye to their pet since the session and is still grieving. During the sales appointment and even during the order delivery, continue to show compassion and empathy for their loss. I also like to provide a small gift to each client, something with their pet's photo on it that they wouldn't necessarily have ordered for themselves.

Privacy and consent: Respect the pet owner's privacy and emotional space during and after the session. Secure the pet owner's consent to use the photos for any other purpose such as promotional materials, on your studio website, or on social media, and have them sign a release. Some clients may want to keep these images private.

Follow-up: After delivering the order, follow up with the owner to express your condolences and offer additional support. This will go a long way in keeping them as a client since most will eventually share their lives with another pet. You want them to remember you when they are ready to capture all the new memories in their lives.

Legacy sessions have become my most requested session in recent years and represent about 60% to 65% of my current clientele. I expect to see an even bigger increase in the next few years as the pet photography industry continues to grow, and more people include their pets as cherished family members. •

Angela Lawson owns a studio in Grand Rapids, Michigan.





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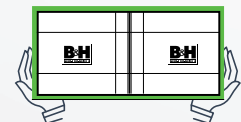


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Proof of Life

**ART WOLFE IS OUT
TO INSPIRE US**

BY MARK EDWARD HARRIS





Art Wolfe's latest book, "Wild Lives: The World's Most Extraordinary Wildlife," is a celebration of the beauty and in many cases the revival of Earth's endangered species, some of which have come back from the edge of extinction. Wolfe's aim is to give viewers rays of hope in these troubled times.

"People, if they are inundated with negative news, get so frustrated they turn off their news sources and get overwhelmed," he says. "Collectively across the country we are experiencing a heightened anxiety. But there are good stories out there. I wanted to offer some nuggets because you motivate and increase awareness through a positive rather than slamming people with negative things. I would love it if a news program, after they've shown the bloody wars ... show what some NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] are doing to solve this issue or that issue. There are a lot of people working on behalf of humans and the planet, but we tend not to hear those



ANATOMY OF AN IMAGE

DATE: June 2020

LOCATION: Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve, Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Mexico

SUBJECT: American crocodile

EQUIPMENT: Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, Canon EF 11-24mm f/4L USM lens, Nauticam housing

PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTES: "I got in the water in Yucatan, Mexico, near its border with Belize to photograph American crocodiles. They will come up at you with their mouth agape and sometimes bounce their noses off my Nauticam that houses my Canon 5D Mark IV. I'm getting great shots of them, but they look like your worst nightmare. They're 9 to 12 feet long but their behavior is not as aggressive as American alligators. The backstory is, there are fishermen's huts that are in the water over the shallows. They'll cook fish when they're overnighting in the hut and throw fish parts back in the water, so these crocodiles have now associated humans with fish parts. So, you get in the water and you're on your knees for stability and you wait for all the sediment to settle and out of nowhere these crocodiles come straight up to you. I kept asking, 'This is safe, right?' They look almost like an anaconda. That milky of the sediment around it in this image disguises the legs. That was done in natural light because it's just below the surface."

stories. So, I wanted to track down and present stories that were positive and give hope. Wildlife does that.”

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Wolfe shares his passion for photography, art, wildlife, and human cultures through countless magazine features, workshops, television shows, lectures, and more than five dozen books. “I try to inspire, uplift, and educate people. That’s what motivates me to go out and spend an inordinate amount of time on the road capturing these images,” he explains.

“During my lectures I talk about how there are more whales in the ocean than there has been in over 50 years. The population of king penguins that live off South Georgia are exploding because of climate change because in the warmer water there are more krill that feed the whole ecosystem from penguins to seals to whales. There are more mountain lions in North America than there has been in 200 years. They are becoming so used to people in their environment they’re getting less stressed. They just sit down and let people go by. So, they’re breeding better. Bald eagles are flourishing. I never saw bald eagles when I was a kid growing up in Seattle; now they’re nesting in every park. The offspring of those eagles are much more accustomed to humans so they’re going to breed more regularly in the presence of humans.”

Wolfe points out that climate change isn’t the only culprit in endangering some species. “Humans are cutting down the forests in Borneo and Sumatra and putting in palm oil plantations,” he says. “It’s leading to the destruction of orangutans and other primates in those forests.” Creating opportunities for relationships between wildlife and humans to be mutually beneficial and yield positive results is something that could be applied more expeditiously to those Indonesian and Malaysian enclaves, he proposes.

The Seattle-based photographer cites an example in Africa where a win-win situation was created from a once one-way transaction. “When I first went to Tanzania in 1980, I climbed Kilimanjaro then went out into the Serengeti

with three friends. I remember going through Arusha, and there were some Maasai women walking on the street and I tried to photograph them. They chased us and threw rocks,” he explains. “Today, the Maasai are expedition drivers, and they have cameras in their laps and are shooting great shots along with their clients. If you bring in the economy to the Maasai, it’s less likely their young men are going to kill a lion as a rite of passage. Now there is much more benefit in keeping those lions alive ... That model has become much more broad-based. Environmental groups learn what works and what doesn’t work. Bringing in the local communities is a major component of keeping an animal alive. In other words, figuring out how to incorporate the livelihood of villagers around these preserves has led to less destruction and more animals.”

Wolfe witnessed another transformation in his pursuit of snow leopards, an animal he considers among the most difficult to document. Adding to the challenges of high elevation, freezing temperatures, and the difficult terrain of the cats’ Himalayan environment is the way the animals can move. “If you look at a snow leopard’s head, it’s got a sloping back forehead. So, it can watch you from behind a rock and there is no way you would ever know it’s there. This gives the snow leopard the ability to stalk animals in an environment where there are no trees,” he explains. “They have to be reliant on their sheer camouflage and their stealth. I went there 10 years ago and photographed a mother with her cubs, but they were so far away and so minuscule in my lens.” He returned to Ladakh, India, in April 2023, seeing multiple snow leopards every day with the help of local spotters he’d hired. “This is another great conservation story,” he says. Where the local farmers and ranchers often used to kill snow leopards that had killed one of their goats or sheep, they’re now being paid as spotters for photography tours.

Tigers are also doing well in India because of their positive impact on the economy. As a result, Wolfe is now able to capture the beauty of the country’s



ART WOLFE

IN HIS BAGS

“I use two different camera bags,” explains Art Wolfe. One is “a smaller Gura Gear bag that fits two lenses and a Canon R5 camera body. I always carry a second camera body in case I have a catastrophic failure. It’s bubble wrapped in my duffel bag. Then I have a bigger Think Tank camera bag if I’m going on a longer trip and I need room for coats and everything else.” The two lenses are Canon’s RF100-500mm F4.5-7.1 L IS USM, which is the workhorse lens, and a Canon RF24-70mm F2.8 L IS USM. Why such a simple set up? “That covers 99 percent of what I want. In general, the more amateur the photographer, the more lenses that they’ve got. They have to have everything because they assume *Why would they make this lens if it wasn’t important?* They’re carrying packs that are a burden. Some photographers have an arsenal.” When Wolfe heads into the ocean it’s with a Canon EOS 5D Mark IV with a Canon EF 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye USM or a Canon EF 11-24mm f/4L lens in a Nauticam underwater housing and strobes for his deeper dives.



national animal from a technical point of view, he says. "We're working in little Jeeps call Gypsies in tiger reserves. I'm handholding my Canon with a 100-500mm lens. There's no place for a tripod or monopod nor is there a need. You're more likely to miss a shot if you use them in that situation."

Wolfe used the same camera set up for the "Wild Lives" cover image of a charging bear taken on the outskirts of Alaska's Katmai National Park and Preserve (left). It's one of the most powerful images of wildlife ever recorded, and it's one Wolfe feels was only possible to capture with modern technology. "I would not have been able to get this shot 10 years ago. The high ISO, low digital noise sensor of the Canon EOS-1D X Mark II gave me the opportunity to use a faster shutter speed, in this case 1/5,000th of a second, and my subject tracking kept my 100-400mm in sharp focus as she ran toward me as I was zooming out. I first photographed this bear as a spring cub, and for four years I was around her for at least two weeks a year, so I knew her very well. All these bears have different fishing techniques, but this one runs from afar in a straight line and pounces at the last minute. So, I knew where to position myself and then lay as flat as I could. Initially, there was quite a bit of distance between the bear and me. By the time she pounced on a salmon, she was probably 20 feet away. In every one of my photos, I try to convey to the viewer the same feeling I felt the moment I took the picture. Eye contact is paramount."

REJECTING REDUNDANCY

The path that led Art Wolfe to that riverbank began in Seattle in 1951 with his birth to Richard and Ellinor Wolfe. Richard was a photographer and a printer, Ellinor a painter. Growing up in that creative environment and refining his technical skills at the University of Washington, where he earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts and art education, would later show itself in Wolfe's beautifully composed photography and his own artwork created with a brush. His book, "Human Canvas," in particular, shows off his paint-

ing ability, which he then documented with creative studio lighting and a Leica camera. "I never want to get pigeonholed. 'Human Canvas' is a perfect example. It shocked a lot of people. Even with my wildlife books, I often photograph the same animal but in very distinct different ways. 'The Living Wild' was a wide-angle perspective of small animals. 'Vanishing Act' was camouflage in nature. 'Rhythms from the Wild' was long exposure impressionist shots. 'Migrations' was patterns in nature inspired by the work of M.C. Escher. 'Wild Lives' is a natural history book. Here are six different examples of books with six different points of view. I don't want to be redundant."

Over his 50-year career, Wolfe has pho-

tographed more than 500 species in 60 countries. He's also taken deep dives into human cultures around the globe. He's philosophical about a reality that all creatures face. "Aging is a series of adjustments. The people that have longevity are not allowing themselves to fall into the trap *Oh, the better part of my life is over*. You just have to pursue your passion and keep your spirits high. I think health comes along with that. I'm treating a bursitis; that's just normal stuff. I'm more concerned about people's psychology." There's no doubt that Wolfe's body of work is great medicine. •

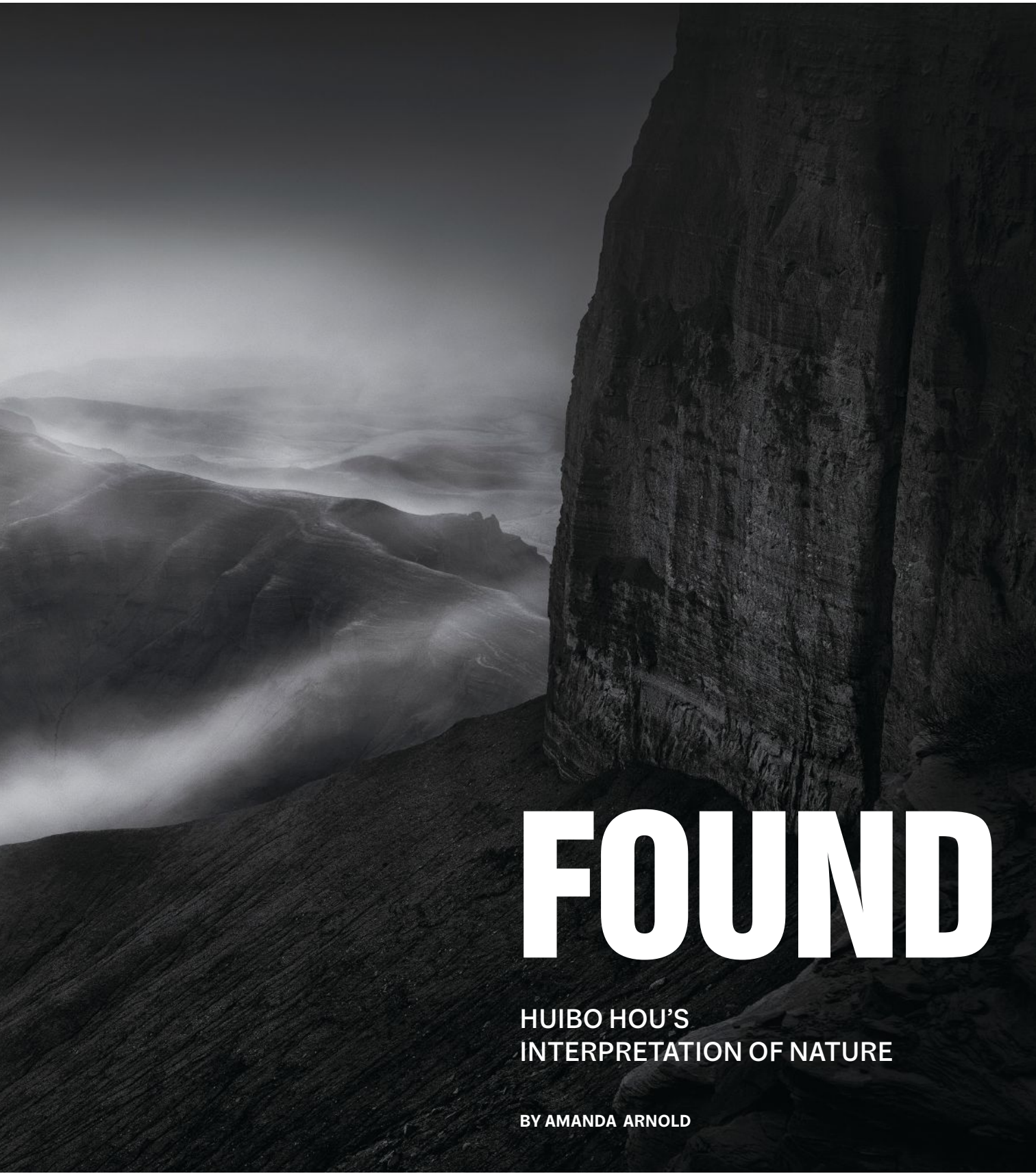
Mark Edward Harris is an award-winning photographer and writer based in Los Angeles.



LOST AND



IMAGES ©HUIBO HOU / huibohou.com



FOUND

HUIBO HOU'S
INTERPRETATION OF NATURE

BY AMANDA ARNOLD





In the early days of Huibo Hou's landscape photography, she typically arrived at a location with a specific previsualized image in mind. She'd done her homework, perused the images of other photographers, and set her sights on a particular composition in a particular locale at a particular time of day. "But over the years, I found that this approach wasn't working for me at all," she says. One, it often led to disappointment, as nature doesn't always go our way, meaning that her previsualized scene could differ greatly from reality. Two, the image she had in mind was inevitably influenced by other photographers' works, so it wasn't a unique take.

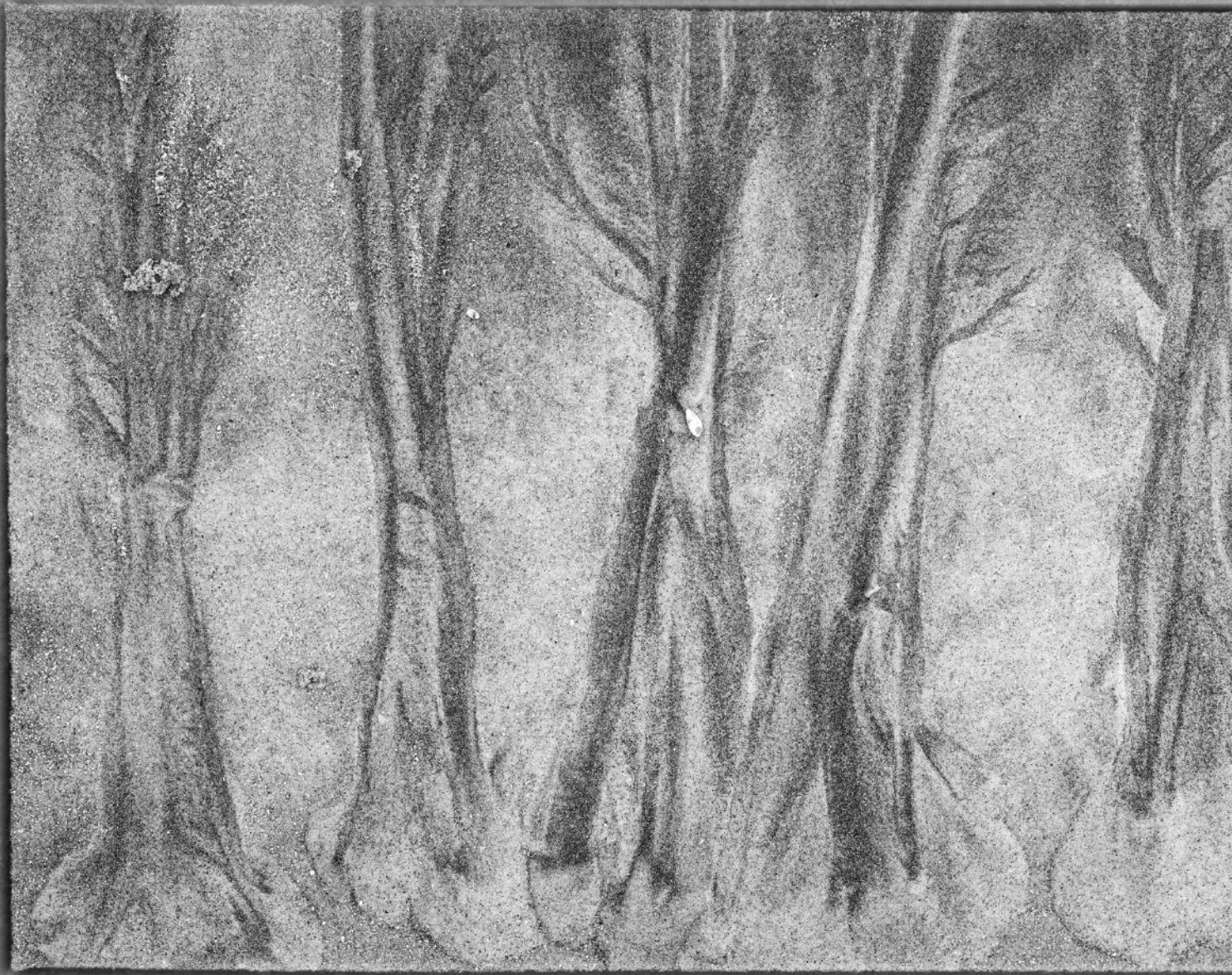
"Nowadays I just make sure I am in the rough vicinity of the right place around roughly the right time," she says, remaining open-minded, flexible, and receptive as she surveys the scene. Instead of worrying about whether she can achieve an intended image, "I

just let it be, just follow my intuition, and enjoy the experience," she explains. "I let the images find me rather than the other way around."

IMMERSED IN NATURE

Hou began making photographs 26 years ago on a road trip with her parents, who were visiting the United States from China. When she returned from the trip and developed her point-and-shoot photos, she was disappointed that the prints didn't do justice to the grandeur of Yosemite National Park and the Grand Canyon. She purchased her first SLR and dove into improving the quality of her photos, a pursuit that has continued over almost three decades. "When I started, I really just had a simple purpose, to reproduce the beauty of the nature that I saw," she says. Over the years her intent and her style have evolved significantly. "It went from trying to just do justice to what I see to really





using it [photography] as a medium to show how I observe things and how I interpret the nature.”

A self-described introvert, Hou finds landscape photography an ideal fit for her personality, she says. It was also a welcome respite from her previous career as a computer engineer at a high-tech company. “I guess subconsciously I wanted to escape into a state that was simple and quiet,” she says. “Landscape photography provided a sanctuary for that. It let me slow down and just feel more relaxed. It also helped me discover a creative or artistic side that I didn’t even know I had.”

Hou often camps at the location she’s photograph-

ing so she can immerse herself in the natural surroundings. “I like to get up early—like, way early in the dark—because one of my favorite things to do is to shoot in the soft color before sunrise,” she explains. She continues making photographs after sunrise when the light remains good and most people are still asleep, a quiet period she cherishes. “I can take my time to observe and capture the landscape.” After a relaxing cup of coffee at the campsite, feeling satisfied she’s already accomplished something, she spends the morning and afternoon studying and scouting the area for photographs. “Late in the after-



noon, I'm usually already in the field getting ready to start shooting, and I usually stay well after sunset."

IN BLACK-AND-WHITE

Though Hou makes all her photographs in color, much of her work is converted to black-and-white in post-production. She began presenting black-and-white work based on her reaction to other photographers' work that she admired. "Whenever I see a great black-and-white image, I feel my heart will skip a beat," she says. "They just seem to be capable of touching me in a more profound way without the distraction of

color." What she loves about the medium aligns with what she loves about landscape photography—its simplicity. Black-and-white images "portray the essence of the subject," she says.

Even though digital cameras can capture full resolution in black-and-white, she photographs in color because she likes the process of visualizing the final product in black-and-white in her mind's eye and then later converting it to black-and-white and adjusting the tones in post-production. If the essence of the image to her is a certain color nuance or contrast, she'll keep the image in color, but if the essence of

the image is its patterns and lines, she converts it to black-and-white to elevate the visual and emotional impact. Sometimes she can visualize exactly how an image will look in black-and-white; other times it's not clear until she creates it in post-production.

There are two things Hou keeps in mind for creating an impactful black-and-white image: form and mood. Nature is disorganized, she notes, so she looks for ways to extract order from the chaos, keeping her compositions as simple as possible. "I've learned that I have to see landscape beyond its literal appearance and intentionally see it in a more abstract way," she explains. This enables her to create images of commonly photographed locales in a new way. When she photographed the natural scenes of Iceland, for example, she focused on the geometric shapes and lines of the landscape.

The second element she looks for is mood. "I think black-and-white is very powerful to deliver atmosphere and mood and emotion," she says. To absorb that mood, she must be completely present and immersed in the moment as she's making photographs: "When I'm in the field, I think this intuitive vision and this feeling will usually lead me to quote, unquote see

the final image in my mind's eye. Then later when I go back home and [edit] these images, what I usually try to do is to reproduce what I saw in my mind's eye in the field through my post-processing."

Simplicity is also important to her style. Stripping an image of its color forces you to focus on the basic structure and story of the composition, she explains. "I find myself constantly thinking how I can simplify things when I compose, to extract and reveal something simple, something essential about the landscape without putting too much clutter into the composition." Over the years, this simplicity has become quintessential to her style. "When I go back and look at my older work, they [the photos] tend to be much busier and usually contain more details and textures. But ... especially in more recent years, my work definitely has become more simplified because I realized the power of keeping images simple but still being able to deliver a much more focused intent."

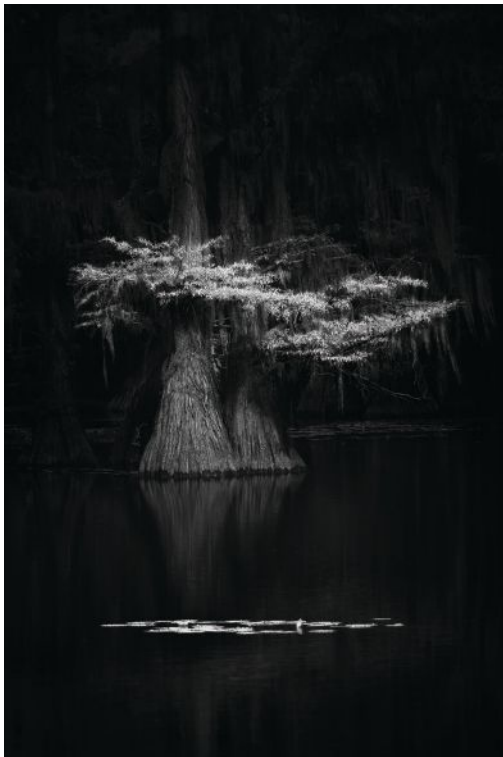
THE ESSENCE

Just as it's important to reveal the essence of a subject, it's also important for a photographer to reveal their



INFRARED POWER

A few years ago, Huibo Hou converted her old Canon EOS 5D Mark II into a 720nm infrared camera that she uses for occasional black-and-white work. She uses the camera during the harsh daytime light to alter the tones of the landscape and sky in those conditions. "The blue sky will become much darker, and the white clouds will become more visible, more prominent," she explains.



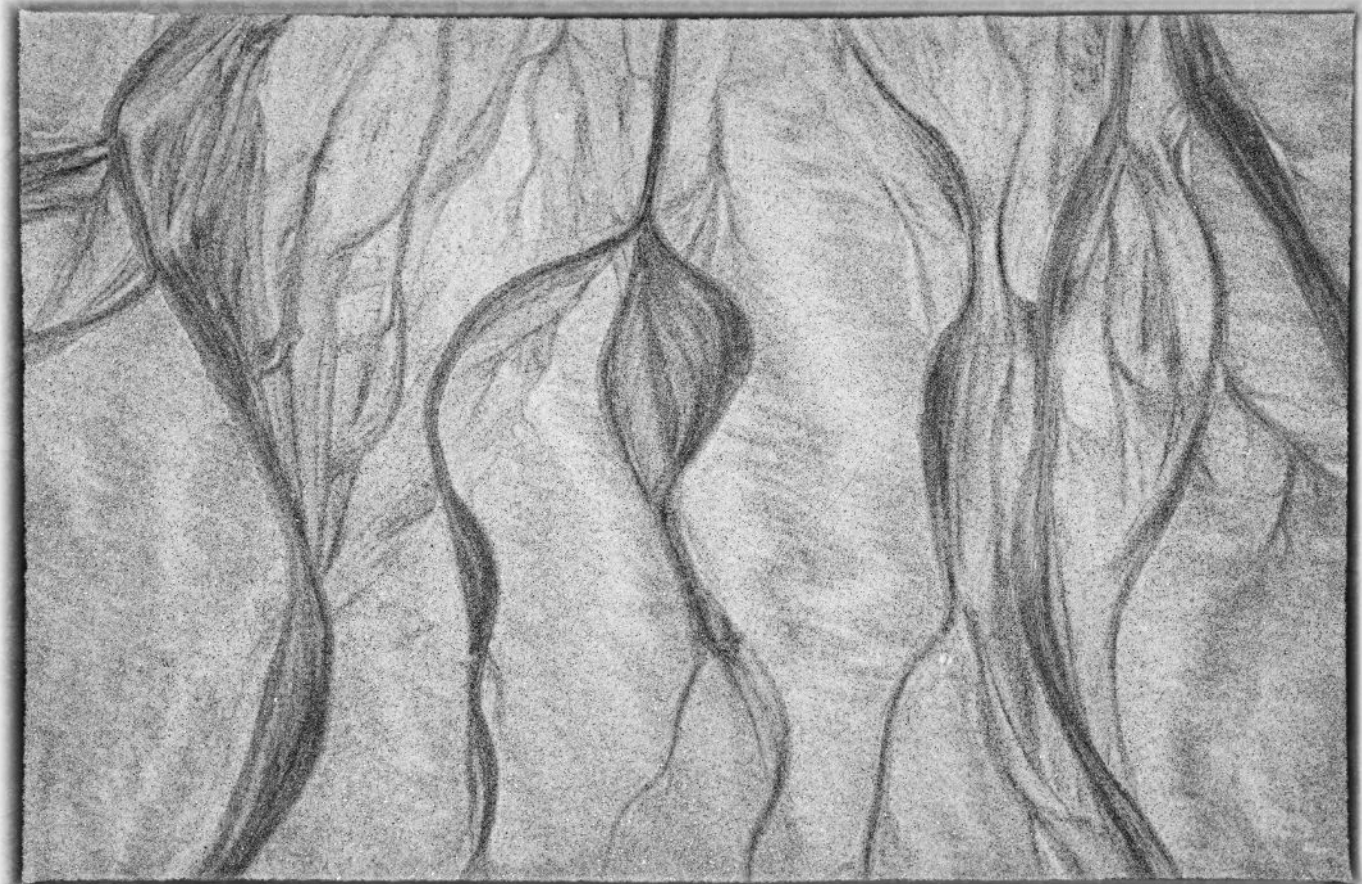
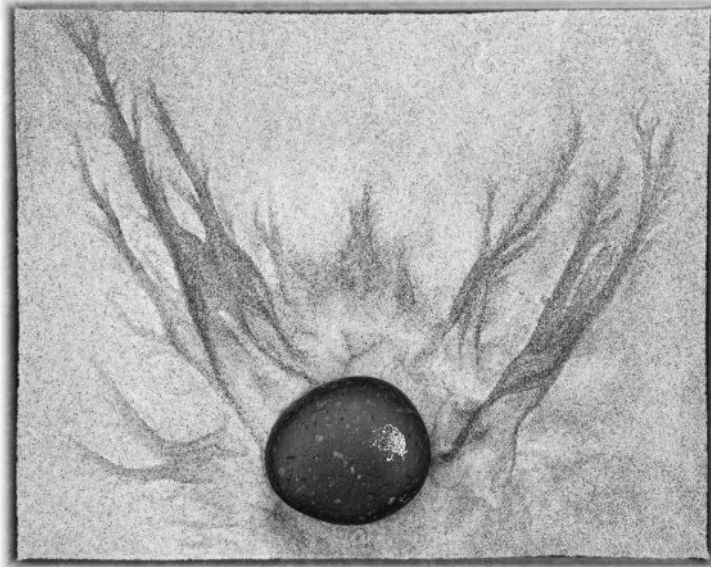
HOU'S INFLUENCES

Guy Tal
Brooks Jensen
Bruce Percy
Alex Noriega

own essence through images. “If there’s only one principle that all of us should follow in our journey of photography, it is staying true to ourselves,” says Hou. “This is probably the most important thing I have learned or extracted from my own photography journey.”

Hou’s advice for staying true to oneself: First, go at your own pace, allowing yourself time to develop despite what you see others doing. Second, focus on developing a personal connection with your subject matter and creating a style that reflects who you are. She finds this more important and interesting than producing work that’s similar to what’s been done. Three, shield yourself from the noise of social media—and that includes any praise you might receive for the work you share. “Resist the pressure to conform,” she says. “I think it’s great and beneficial to get constructive feedback and inspiration from others. But I think it’s dangerous to evaluate your own work purely based on how it is accepted by others.”

Perhaps as important is to follow your intuition and to find enjoyment. “When I relax and I am receptive, I really usually can produce better work,” Hou says. That’s when the best of the best images find her. •



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THE LONG AND
WINDING ROAD
OF MJ KIM

BY MARK EDWARD HARRIS



MJ Kim has been documenting Paul McCartney since 2008, following the legendary ex-Beatle around the globe as he entertains millions of fans through the common language of music.

Kim started his circuitous route toward photography in 1995 at the London College of Communications (formerly known as the London College of Printing and Distributive Trades) in London, England. Having held some entry-level film jobs in his native South Korea, Kim began his formal education by studying filmmaking before still photography took his interest. “The more I took pictures, the more I fell in love with still photography,” he says.

There, during the last years of the film era, Kim learned lessons that continue to serve him. “When you shoot film, it’s money,” he says. “You have to buy film, paper, and so on. Every shot is important. I love the technology of the digital revolution, but everything is so easy, perhaps too easy, and produces too many images.” This contrast of technologies is in part responsible for his exploration into alternative methods throughout his career. Kim has used the 19th-century wet plate collodion process to make celebrity portraits, for example, and worked with Polaroids exposed through his 8x10 Kodak Eastman 2D view camera for several series, including one documenting master metal craftsmen working in Seoul.

When economic realities caused Kim to put schooling on hold, he found practical education through a series of jobs in London that gave him experience in news, including for *The Daily Telegraph* and the Press Association. When he landed a job with Getty Images as a senior entertainment photographer in 2004, the experience was career changing. Assignments included coverage of international events including the Cannes, Venice, and Berlin film festivals as well as movie junkets that put him in contact with public re-

lations people and celebrity agents that would soon pay massive dividends.

His first freelance assignment after leaving Getty in 2007 was to photograph the Spice Girls for four months on their reunion tour. Their publicist, Stuart Bell, was also Paul McCartney’s publicist. After the tour, Bell asked McCartney to look at Kim’s work, which McCartney liked. They’ve been collaborating ever since.

BEST DECISION

In 2008, having recently started working with McCartney, Kim returned to school during his off time to earn a Master of Arts degree in fashion photography from the London College of Fashion. “I knew how to do live action shoots because I was a news photographer,” he explains. “On stage, musicians produce amazing energy that only comes out on stage. During the live performance, you can capture that energy as a photojournalist, but you don’t have any control. In the studio, however, you can influence the image by lighting and directing the subject. I wanted to create my own images, but I didn’t know how. So, I decided to go back to school and learn. It was one of the best decisions I ever made.

“I think you can learn technique, such as studio lighting, fairly quickly, but the more important thing to learn is the understanding of what’s behind the images, why you think this image is beautiful, why you want to create these kinds of images. I had a lot of whys, question marks in my head. That’s why I decided to go back to school.”

His studies took him beyond technique into the history of photography, painting, and architecture as well as visual inspirations. For his final project, Kim asked McCartney’s daughter Stella if he could use some of her dresses for a fashion series. “The concept was that the girl was laying down wearing a white plain gown represent-





ANATOMY OF AN IMAGE

LOCATION: Oslo, Norway

SUBJECT: Paul McCartney

PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTES: "My all-time favorite photo of Paul is with his Hofner bass in his left hand, arms wide open. Certain photos, if you miss one show, you can get it another time. But he never had done this pose before or after in the 15 years I've been working with him. I love the expression on his face and how he's holding his Hofner; that's really powerful and confident. It was toward the end of the show, and he was about to pass his Hofner to his guitar tech. Everything I shoot is in color digital, and some images like this one I convert to black-and-white. I do it by instinct, whatever feels right for the image. Usually documentary style, especially backstage, I prefer in black-and-white, but onstage I usually keep them as color. This was an exception. Paul is hands-on, not only with photography but on the whole production. After every three shows we sit down together, and I show him my edit in his dressing room using Photo Mechanic software. He selects, yes, no, and best."



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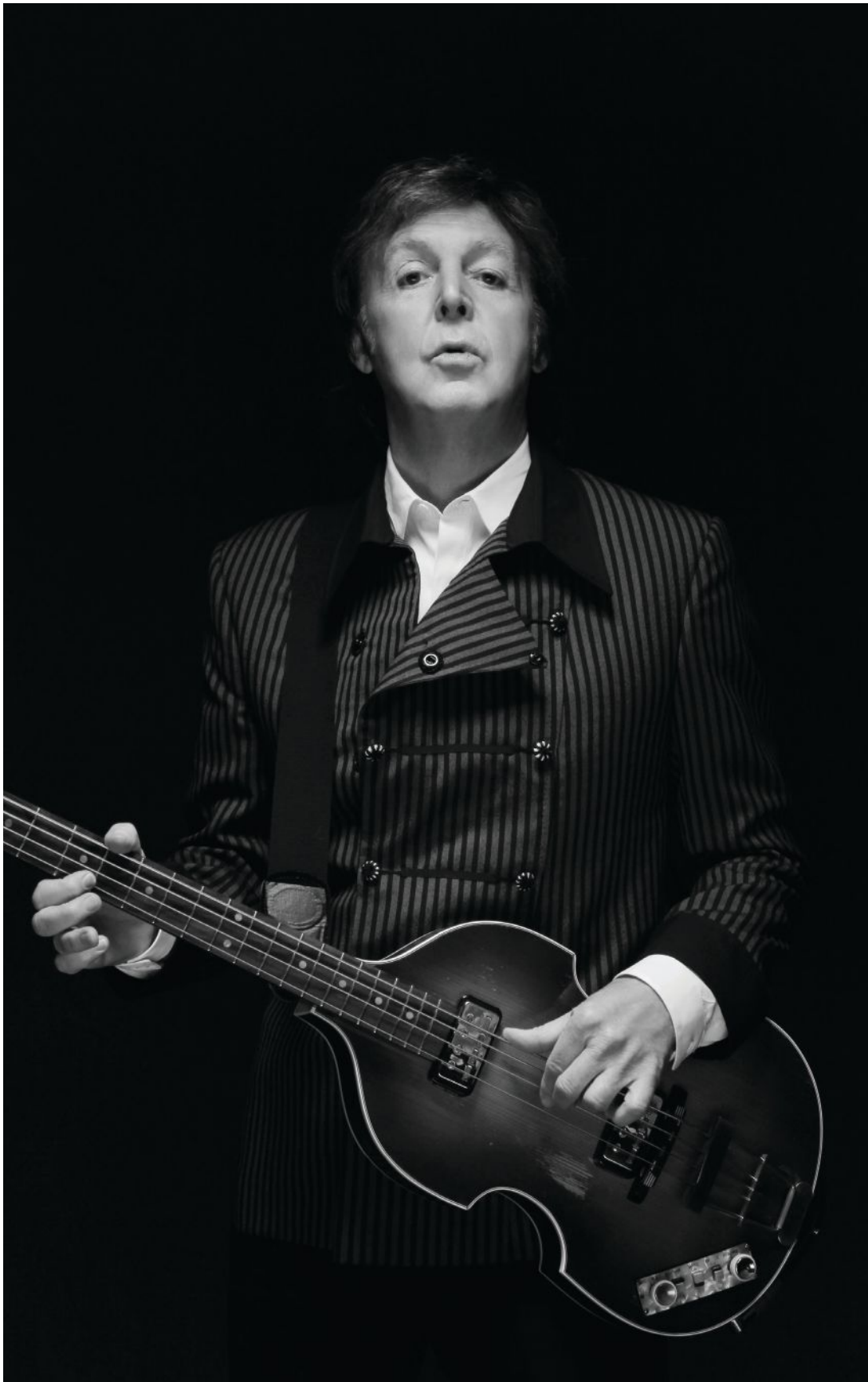
MJ KIM

ing her death. But when she's resurrected, she's wearing Stella's dress and has full makeup and hair. She's resurrected with a fashion soul."

BEYOND THE STILL IMAGE

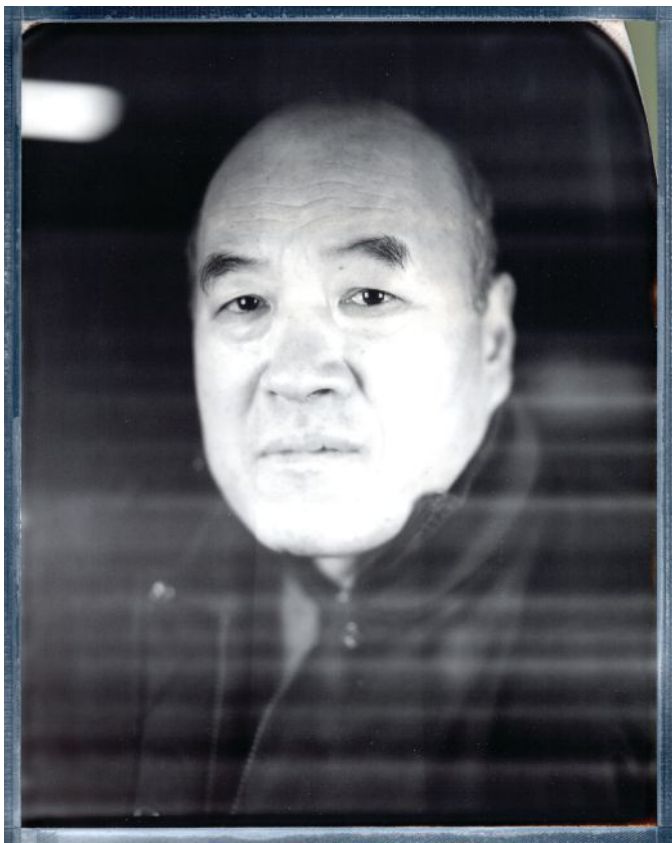
The desire to go beyond documenting celebrities has led Kim to pursue personal projects, including film directing. He asked himself the question, When can I bring my own art piece into the world? And he found the answer in his roots: film directing.

But it was a chance encounter that would reignite this latent desire to tell stories through moving pictures. In 2019, Kim met an Australian movie producer who had seen Kim's photo exhibit in Singapore. They became friends, and Kim was then introduced to a writer, who took up a film synopsis Kim had written and turned it into a script for a short film. To make a long and winding story short, says Kim, "We got the cast and crew together, filmed the short 'Juicy Girl' in Korea, and won something like 30 awards." With the success of the short it was time to focus on a full-length film. The feature has the same basic story line as the short, and production is slated to begin this year.



STARTING IN DARKNESS

MJ Kim explains that for his fashion and portrait shoots, he starts in the darkness and builds the light, adding modifying tools such as beauty dishes with grids to attain the look he's seeking. Thinking back to his school days and his introduction to 16th-century painter Michelangelo Caravaggio: "It's similar to Rembrandt lighting but more dramatic. I like a bit of dark, moody lighting. There's an expression in Italian, *chiaroscuro*, which means the use of strong contrasts between light and dark. I find that look particularly appealing."



IN HIS BAG

MJ Kim loads his Think Tank Airport roller bag with Canon EOS R5 and 5Ds bodies, though he plans to upgrade to an EOS R6 Mark II soon, an RF100-500mm lens for concert photography, Canon 70-200mm, 24-105mm, 16-35mm lenses, and an 8-15mm fisheye. He doesn't mind the slow f/4.5-7.1 aperture of the 100-500mm lens because, as he says, "The high ISOs of the Canon R5 are so nice, you can shoot at 3,000 ISO without any noise." He uses image stabilization and feels comfortable shooting down to 1/250 second during concerts. Another technique he often uses: "Because of face detection with the R5 I don't have to look through the viewfinder anymore, so I sometimes put the camera on a monopod and hold it up for a high angle with the LCD screen tilted down and trigger it remotely." Kim also uses the Think Tank belt system combined with two Spider Camera Holsters and carries a Canon Speedlite 580 flash for backstage and crowd photos using a slow shutter to incorporate ambient light.





BACK ON THE ROAD

After two years off from touring because of the COVID-19 pandemic, McCartney returned to the big stage in 2022. “The shows have been as amazing as ever,” says Kim, who remains awed by McCartney’s energy and talent. “He was born in 1942 and is doing three-hour shows.”

Kim’s favorite McCartney song is “I Saw Her Standing There” because of its classic rock ‘n’ roll rhythm as well the story it tells, which reminds him of his youth in Korea. The song was released two decades before Kim was born and half a world away. The music and lyrics transcend both the years and international borders.

“It is quite amazing to see 50,000 multi-generation people, I mean from three years to 100 years old, enjoying the same music together,” Kim says. It is such a pleasure to witness and to capture the love and harmony.” •



Mark Edward Harris is an award-winning photographer and writer based in Los Angeles.

Distinction Active

FLORENCE MCCALL'S
COMMERCIAL
APPROACH TO
FAMILY PORTRAITS

BY JEFF KENT

STRATEGY







What does it take to run a successful portrait studio in one of the most expensive ZIP codes in America? For two decades, Florence McCall has been building connections with a range of clients in and around Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Her commercial-style lighting and customized communications are designed to appeal to discerning photography lovers. Hers is a work-intensive strategy, different from the more casual approach of many portrait photographers, and that's what's differentiated her business and endeared her to a dedicated clientele.

McCall started out as a photojournalist for a small newspaper in San Francisco, where her regular assignments included photographing business executives throughout the Bay Area. It was the definition of learning on the job. She gained a critical education in working with high-stature individuals to produce quality editorial portraits on location regardless of setting or circumstances.

These lessons would prove invaluable when McCall followed a calling to live the mountain life and moved to Jackson, where she opened Florence McCall Photography. She dabbled in ski photography before transitioning into weddings and then portraits. The work has involved plenty of interactions with high-net-worth individuals who frequent the area. And many of her location sessions make use of the lighting, posing, and composition techniques she honed while photographing CEOs in the Bay Area.

LIGHTING IS THE WAY

Lighting has been critical to McCall's portraiture. She describes her technique as an Annie Liebowitz-style adaptation of Rembrandt lighting, applying complementary lighting with off-camera strobes and adjusting the light using scrims and light boxes to separate subjects from the background. Her aim is to capture the beautiful detail of the background—particularly important for outdoor portraits in Jackson Hole—while still placing flattering light on subjects' faces.

"When I came to Jackson, people started hiring me specifically because of my approach to lighting," says McCall. "Everyone does natural light around here. I offered a more commercial style of light that people found appealing. You get a beautiful shape on people's faces, where the eyes really pop, which helps make a connection in the portrait that I really love."

She uses a more labor-intensive, time-consuming process, but the results she achieves have been a great differentiator in a market where many clients are looking for something more polished than a natural light setup in a local park. In fact, when McCall was considering a move toward the trend of natural light photography, clients reaffirmed that they chose her for her aesthetic and technique, not because she was doing what everyone else was.

"That was a revelation," she says. "I realized that my style and approach are what makes me special, not trying to mimic whatever trend is currently popular. It helped me believe in the value I provide and have confidence in what I'm doing because it does take a lot of work. I'm bringing three assistants and a lot of gear like a commercial photographer. I'm exhausted when I'm done with a shoot. That validation makes it worth it and helps me have the confidence to keep the vision going."



SELLING ART

And with confidence and vision comes the potential for elevated sales. McCall focuses her efforts on wall art, pre-conditioning clients for substantial orders from their first interactions. Those interactions usually begin with her website, where she intentionally displays the types of photographs she wants to create: portraits and headshots.

“If you have a website that has seven different portfolios with all kinds of different photography, it’s too confusing for clients,” says McCall. “Sure, I can take all sorts of pictures, but that’s not the point. Clients want to come to a photographer who is really good at the kind of photography they want, someone who knows exactly what they’re doing and can deal with any situation.”

Once clients have reviewed her portfolio and made contact, the vetting process begins. McCall asks a series of questions to determine if they align with what she offers and if their end goal is the same as hers. People who are looking only for digital images or a Christmas card picture are not her clients. But if they’re interested in investing in wall art to commemorate their family, then the process continues.

This is why it’s important not to hide anything during the initial client conversations, says McCall. The more open you can be about your process, your goals, and your pricing, the more quickly you can identify your target clients.

“I used to be afraid to talk about prices,” she says. “I was insecure about it, but I learned that if I want to align with someone, I have to be up front about what I cost and the value I provide. If you hide that and surprise them at the end, you end up losing because they’re not expecting it, and that leads to problems.”

Once she’s determined she’s in sync with a client, McCall schedules an in-person or Zoom meeting, where she goes over pricing again and formulates a plan to create the images for the client’s desired end products. She follows up this meeting with multiple texts or emails to work out specifics for the session, and she repeats key details to document everything that’s been agreed on. All told, it’s a fair amount of legwork up front, but that work leads to a smooth ordering process after the session.

“A lot of photographers skip these early stages or rush through it because they’re in a hurry to get to the session,” observes McCall. “If you do that, you can end up wasting so much time because you’re not on the same page with your client, and you’re not creating the right images for what they ultimately want to purchase.”

This abundance of communication gets busy clients to slow down and pay attention. McCall finds that personal interactions work better than automated messages for her clients because she’s able to make a connection and verify that they aren’t just blindly approving things without understanding what’s involved. All the while, she strives to strike a balance between persistence and flexibility. “The more fluid and easygoing you can be about





FLORENCE McCALL



communications, the more appreciative clients will be,” she says. “People are overwhelmed, so try to make it easy for them. Make it simple. Be supportive. That goes a long way when building these client relationships.”

COLLABORATION WINS

Early in her career, McCall felt like she was doing more battling than collaborating with clients. Eventually, she realized that her disputes arose from a lack of confidence in her skills and approach. As she matured as an artist, that confidence grew, helped in no small part by the validation given by many happy clients. Now, with the self-assurance that comes with experience, McCall finds her client interactions much more collaborative and fulfilling. It’s allowed her to be more creative and approach each session with the assuredness that she can deliver something clients will love.

“Confidence is really important,” she says. “I hear a lot of other photographers, particularly women, who are more insecure at times, and it affects how they work with their clients. It helps to remember that people need photos for all sorts of reasons, and they need your unique approach to those photos. If you have confidence to go out there, throw your shoulders back, and tell yourself, *I got this*, then you can accomplish all kinds of things.” •



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KEN MENDOZA

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JILL BLANCHAR

The method for earning PPA Exhibition merits underwent a sea change last year. The new Merit Image Review process allows members to work toward PPA degrees at their own pace throughout the year and without the obligation to share their submitted images with the public. All told, 5,937 images were entered into MIR in 2023 and 3,357 critiques were ordered. All this work went toward the disbursement of 155 degrees.

Seasoned photographer Ken Mendoza, M.Wed.Photog., found a continuous opportunity for constructive feedback through MIR. “It allows me to embody the 12 elements of a merit image while working, encouraging me to slow down and perfect my shots in camera,” he says. Because the MIR process takes place 10 months a year, photographers can stay engaged consistently in their work toward degrees.

Jill Blanchar, CPP, is at the start of her journey toward a master of photography degree, having accumulated her first three merits in 2023. She emphasizes the importance of having a goal and getting constructive criticism. “The critiques helped me view my work from a different perspective,” she says. Feedback from the critiques has been a catalyst for Blanchar to refine her art.

Members can submit up to four images per month and opt to receive a critique at the time of MIR registration. Image submissions are evaluated by a panel of five trained jurors. For image makers who opt for a critique, the jurors provide expert video feedback on how an image might be improved. This feedback can then be applied to the image for resubmission at a later time. •

ppa.com/mir

Permission to Evolve



I'm a bit of a hopeless romantic," Brenda Pottinger, M.Wed. Photog., CPP, admits. Approaching her 20th year as a wedding

photographer, Pottinger's journey has a bit of a love-conquers-all theme.

Early in her career, Pottinger recalls the praise she received from family and friends. They noticed how she captured the unique qualities of couples—the traits that defined their relationships and endeared them to loved ones. These were subtle yet significant details often overlooked by others. As Pottinger honed her skills, passing the certified professional photographer exam and earning her CPP credential, she found her technical expertise allowed her to be more present and intuitive with her subjects. Knowing her technique by heart, she could rely on her intuition to capture the moments that mattered most.

Pottinger views her role as more than just a photographer; she sees herself as a family historian. "Maybe they have a unique laugh, a weird family tradition, or a silly way they joke with their brother," she says. Pottinger knows that these nuances are critical to her work. To uncover these details, she typically begins with an engagement session, fostering a familiarity with the couple that transforms her into a "friend with a camera" by wedding day. This connection allows her to blend into the celebration, capturing it authentically.

Certain things, like weddings, birthday parties, and 10-year anniversaries can be planned, but meeting your first love? Not quite. Pottinger's own love story began unexpectedly. On a whim, she joined a climbing trip to Seneca Rocks, West Virginia, with her college outdoor club. As a cold night set in, she was invited to join a group of climbers she had met at the campfire. A fellow climber offered a seat, which, unbeknownst to her, belonged to Ben, her



©BRENDA POTTINGER

future husband. Ben appeared, playfully chiding the camper for giving away "his" chair. The exchange sparked their initial connection and over the fire that evening, Brenda and Ben talked for hours about their mutual loves: photography and nature. The rest, as they say, is history. •

BLOOM AND GROW
SPRING WORKSHOPS ON THE WAY

Twice a year, photo studios around the United States conduct exclusive workshops through PPA for peer-to-peer education. These sessions cover diverse topics, including posing, lighting, digital editing, workflow, sales, marketing strategies, and more. Spring workshops May 6-20 provide a platform for photographers and creative professionals to network and enhance their skills. PPA members earn one service merit for attending a workshop that can be applied toward a PPA degree. Options for both advance registration and on-site enrollment are available, but some workshops may sell out in advance. • ppa.com/workshops



A CLOSED LOOP

THE SOCIAL NETWORK CLIENTS WON'T SEE

Photographers looking for guidance on improving their business or eager to share their knowledge have a private place to do that where clients won't stumble into these shop talk discussions. TheLoop offers a platform for PPA members to pose questions, dispense wisdom, and engage with colleagues. Members gain access to a supportive network, give encouragement, and participate in prize giveaways. • theloop.ppa.com

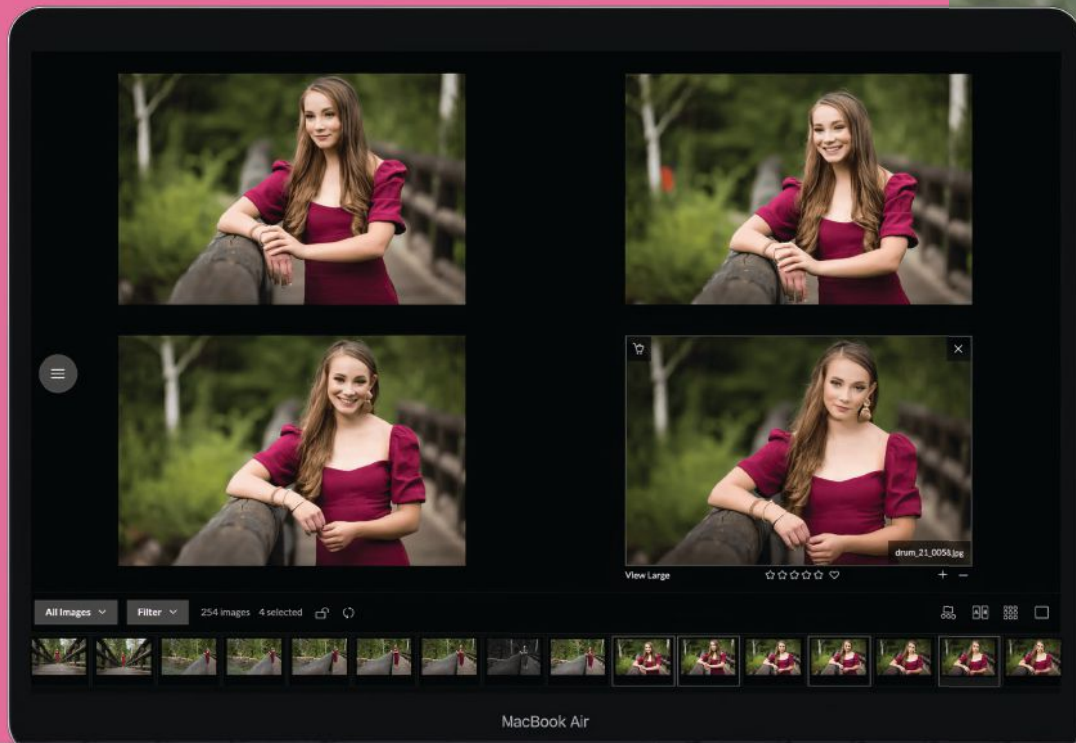
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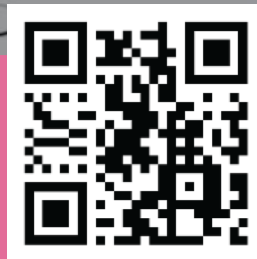


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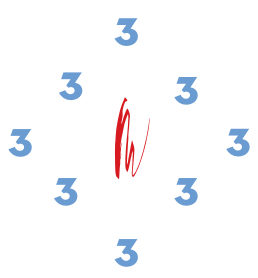
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Photographers helping photographers is what Community Networks are all about. These local creative communities nurture and provide the support and tools to help you grow. As a member of your local Community Network, you will:

- ◆ Connect with peers and mentors
- ◆ Sharpen your skills by competing in your local image competitions
- ◆ Earn merits towards your PPA degree by attending or speaking at a PPA Merit Program
- ◆ Get recognized, build credibility, and set yourself apart
- ◆ Give back to your photographic community
- ◆ And much more!

There's never been a better time to get involved. After all, it's together that we thrive.

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