

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

P.28 EXTEND YOURSELF
How to Work Networking

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Steve McCurry's Latest

Fast Track

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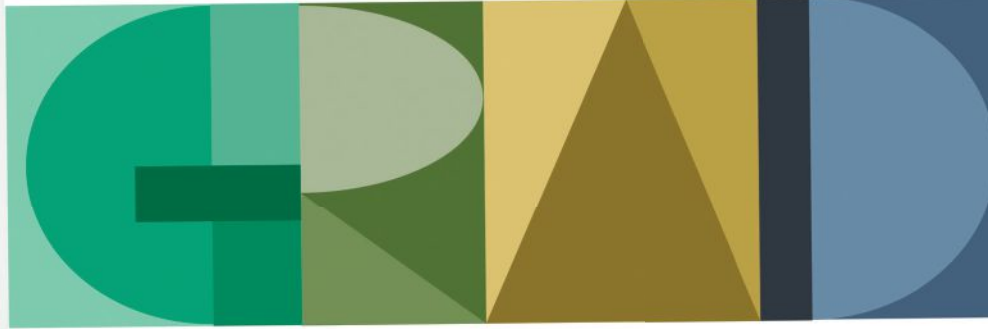
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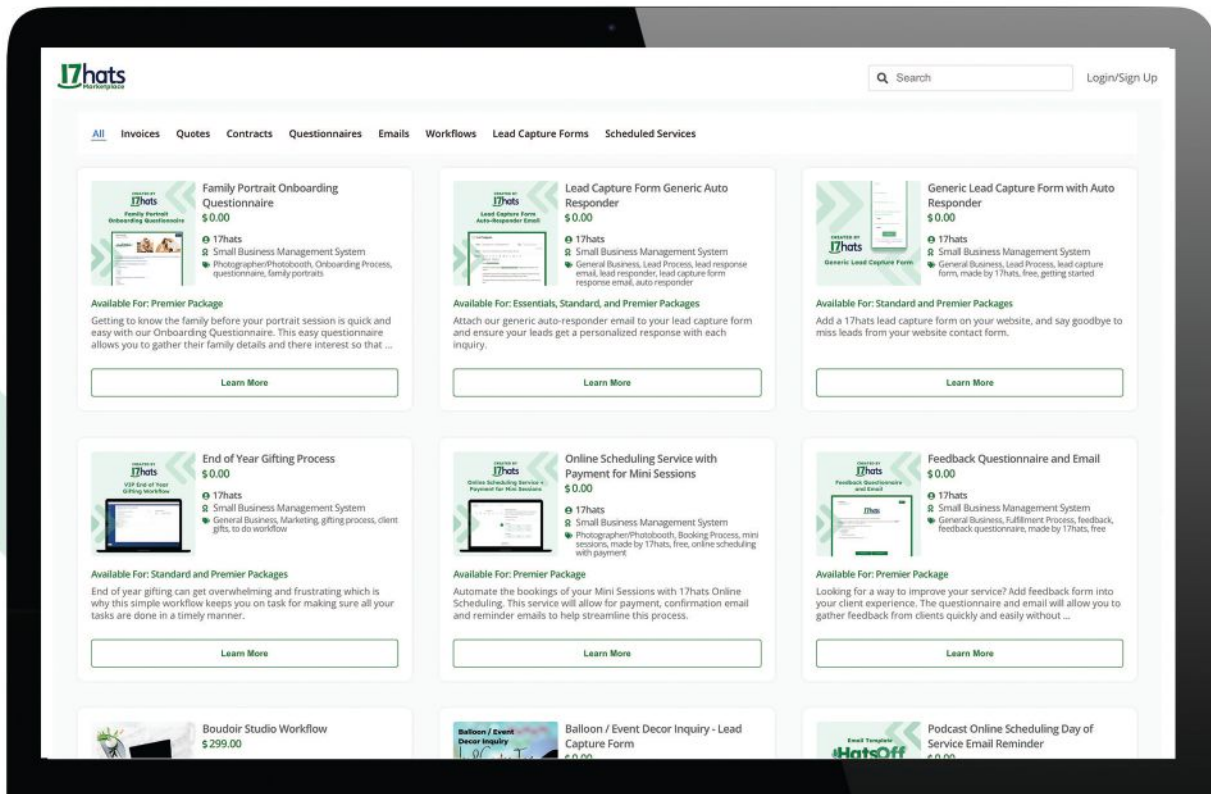
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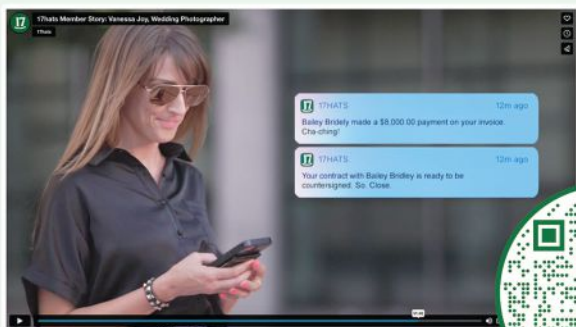
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Great Blessings

USE THE CALENDAR TO REFLECT ON YOUR PURPOSE

I once knew a CEO who gave his employees the day off every March 4th. His reasoning: That date is an opportunity to “march forth” in pursuit of your own goals and dreams.

It sounded a little performative and silly to me then, but over the years, as I have gotten older and advanced in my career, I have come to embrace that idea. Other than May 4th, which somehow has amusingly become associated with the Star Wars edict, “may the force be with you,” is there any other date that offers such simple, direct advice?

I actually took the advice this year. March 4th was my first day as PPA’s new director of publications. During the short time I have been here, I’ve witnessed how this organization helps its members pursue their dreams and goals every day.

This month, Mark Edward Harris writes about renowned Magnum photographer Steve McCurry (“A Great Adventure,” page 72). McCurry’s new book, called “Devotion,” explores the various definitions of that word, including the spiritual and religious. The overall theme of the photographs is how each subject wholly embraces what drives them in life.

The images in “Devotion” are quietly powerful: a doctor with a stethoscope calmly leaning over a newborn, a mass of prostrating Muslims praying at the side of a busy street, a lone figure tending to a Zen garden at a temple in Japan.

“The stronger our devotion, the greater the blessings,” reads a quote in the book by Tibetan Buddhist Dilgo Khyentse. “But to have no devotion is like hiding oneself in a house with all the doors and shutters closed. The sunlight will never get in.”

We all have finite time and energy, and therefore try to be thoughtful about the activities to which we devote those resources. Whether it’s work, leisure time, prayer, caregiving, hobbies—everyone has their own list of drivers. When I was job searching, I wanted my new workplace to include—among other characteristics—creativity, professionalism, positivity, integrity, and humanity. I “marched forth” into this environment at PPA because the organization’s mission and vision align with mine, just as the subjects of McCurry’s book inspired him.

“I’ve been fascinated with people who have a larger purpose in their life. Somebody who’s dedicated to a loved one or a cause,” McCurry told Harris. That compassion, he added, “can bring out the best of the human spirit, giving life purpose and meaning beyond ourselves.”

Sure, a date on a calendar can spur us to action. This month, “the force” is definitely strong with me and I’m sure with most of you as you follow your own pursuits. What these dates—and McCurry’s book—remind us is that each of us has an individual purpose and personal reasons why that purpose speaks to us. Take time to reflect on what you are devoted to and how those elements bless your life and work.

It is May, but you still can march forth! •

Melanie Lasoff Levs
Director of Publications

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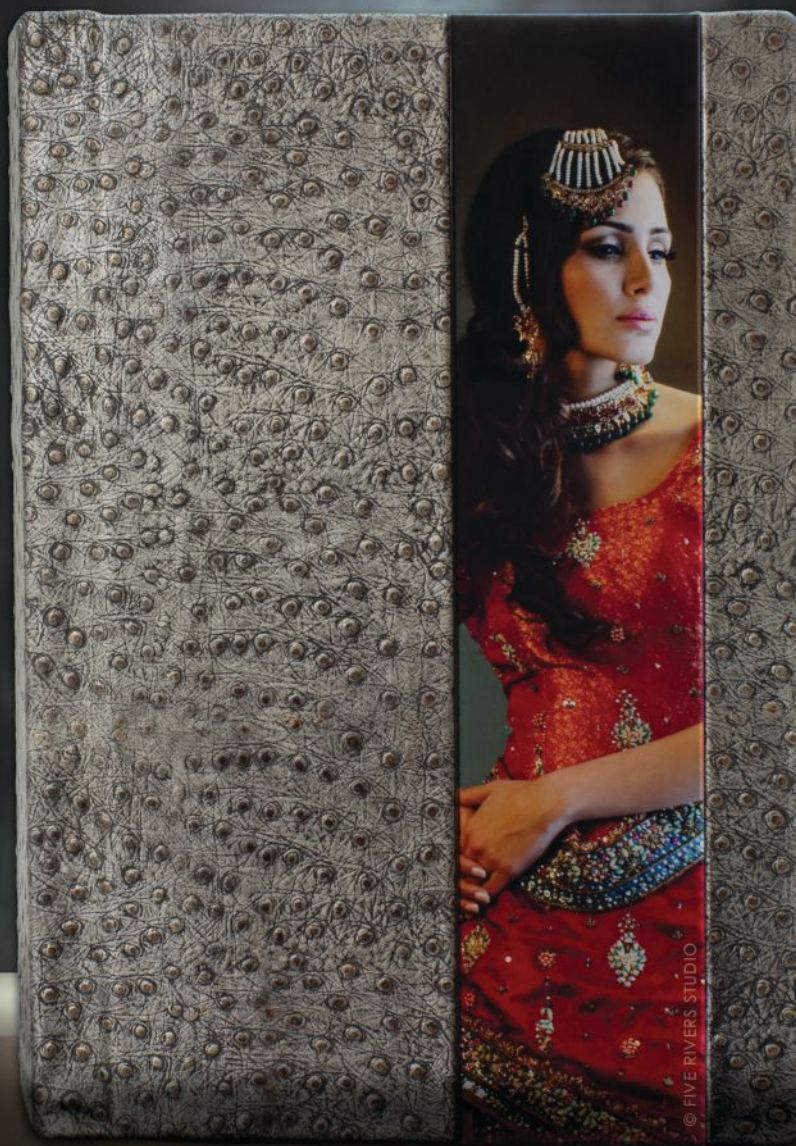


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FOREGROUND

By Amanda Arnold

Impressions

A PAINTERLY ENVIRONMENT

The rippling reflection of a scene in a body of water. The liquid look of a farmer through the heat emanating from a burning field. These are images from Vietnam-based photographer Réhahn's series, "Impressionist Photography," in which he creates photographic works that evoke the paintings of Claude Monet and Vincent van Gogh.

For the series, Réhahn uses a Canon EOS R5 and a selection of prime lenses. He does not use filters or any post-production manipulation, he explains.

"When shooting, I often focus on elements such as light, color, and texture rather than aiming for strict realism," he said. "One of the techniques I employ is shooting through various natural elements, such as fire or heat distortion, to create visual effects."

Réhahn grew up in Honfleur, France, the birthplace of Impressionism. During the COVID-19 lockdown, he felt a pull to reconnect with home via those artists. His research inspired these works and techniques.

For example, for his image "Flame" (below), he positioned himself close to the heat shimmer from burning farmland to capture the distortions in the air created by the intense heat. Those distortions blur the lines of the farmer's figure and the rest of the scene, creating a smudged look that resembles Impressionist brush strokes.

"I find it to be a really satisfying process because you can't control the elements," he says, "so the finished photos are as much a work of the environment as they are my camera." •

IMAGES ©RÉHAHN / rehahnphotographer.com





SIMPLIFIED SETS

BOUDOIR DONE EASY

While chandeliers, staircases, and fireplaces make for lovely boudoir settings, “You do not need to have fancy sets to shoot boudoir photos,” assures Chicago-based boudoir photographer Liz Hansen. “Boudoir photos are intimate portraits and should be more about the person than the environment they are in.” She offers tips for simple, inexpensive sets.

Air mattress and bedding. Inflate a full- or queen-size air mattress with an electric pump then add a white king-size duvet or sheet set for a crisp look. The larger bedding set allows the fabric to drape over the bed and onto the floor. Add simple white shams or throw pillows to lean against the wall as a substitute for a headboard.

Fuzzy rug or blanket. These are easy to find online or at a local home goods store. They add texture to a set. Look for jewel tones, animal prints, or pastels.

Dark backdrop or wall. Paint one wall a dark gray or black, or set up a dark backdrop or seamless paper. “Having a dark setup creates a nice contrast to a white bed,” she explains. “Use a strip box to highlight just a portion of your client’s body and leave the rest up to the viewer’s imagination.” •



War Wounds

PRESERVING BLACK VETERANS' STORIES



IMAGES © JOHNNY CRAWFORD / johnnycrawfordphotography.com

In 2018, Johnny Crawford was attending a men's breakfast at an Atlanta church when some of the men began sharing stories about the Vietnam War. Although he'd known these men for over 10 years, Crawford hadn't heard these stories. He hadn't known, for example, that his friend Johnny Miller had been shot in the lungs and injured by a bomb in the war, and once he recovered and relearned how to walk, was unable to get his job back despite suing his employer. Crawford hadn't known that, due to the draft, fellow church member Byron Powell had lost out on an opportunity for a career as an astronaut and almost lost his life for attempting to wash his clothes in a segregated laundromat.

"These men were among tens of thousands of Black men fighting and dying for the people of South Vietnam to have rights they didn't enjoy as Americans," Crawford says. And given that their stories had been unknown to him, "I knew thousands of men in other communities with similar stories were also unknown," he says.

To highlight these stories, Crawford decided to pursue a personal portrait project, "Vietnam Black Soldiers Portrait Project."

To find portrait subjects, Crawford began with his church contacts, then recruited additional subjects through referrals, veteran's organizations, and his website. "In the beginning, two out of three veterans declined to participate because of PTSD issues or because they didn't want to relive their horrific memories," he says. But over time, Crawford, who has a 28-year background in photojournalism, has made black-and-white portraits of over 100 veterans, photographing them with his Nikon D750 on a gray seamless backdrop with two lights and soft boxes. He shares the photos with his subjects and on the project's website.

His grand plan is to make portraits of veterans in 19 states and Washington, D.C., and exhibit prints in local museums, churches, and schools. The works have already been exhibited in Georgia, and portrait books are available on the project's website.

Financing the exhibitions has been a challenge, Crawford admits. "Most of the funds [for the project] have come from my 401(k), one small grant, and a donation from my church," he says. But it's not a project driven by profit, he adds. "The project is driven to preserve these men in history." •

SCHEDULE A WEEKLY MEETING WITH YOURSELF

QUIET REFLECTION REAPS REWARDS

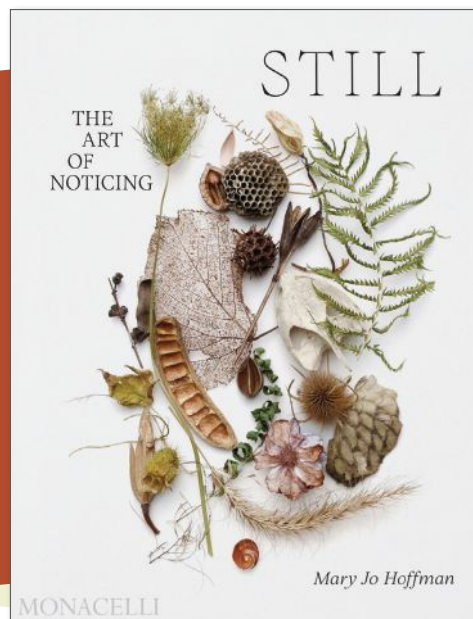
Set aside one hour a week minimum for “CEO time,” advises Pat Miller in his PPA webinar, “Productivity Hacks to Save Time and Money.” Put away your phone, close your laptop, pour yourself a cup of coffee, and ask yourself: How’s it going? Where are you in relation to your goals? Where are you with your workflows? How are you feeling? “Stopping to look around and take stock of the business is really important,” Miller says, “and it’s one of the real opportunities to make those choices that matter.” Maybe you decide to reprioritize tasks, delegate certain work to a virtual assistant or a contractor, or identify things you should do differently. Set aside this time on a weekly basis and protect it, Miller urges. • ppa.com/edu



DAILY OBSERVATION

MEDITATIONS ON NATURE

Pine needles, fall leaves, orange slices, bird feathers. Each day, for over a decade, Mary Jo Hoffman (“The Still Life,” April 2022) has been making photos of objects she collects from nature and uploading them to her blog, “Still.” Each photo is made on a white background, giving the series a consistently minimalist style that accentuates the natural colors of the objects. Her new book “Still: The Art of Noticing” (Phaidon) will feature a selection of these images plus essays by Hoffman with insights on what she’s learned through this daily photographic ritual that honors her natural surroundings. •



©MARY JO HOFFMAN / stillblog.net

Find Your Purpose

IT MAY CLARIFY YOUR DIRECTION

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



©DAVID DESILVA

I'm dating a mermaid. She's not just a mermaid, she's the Pittsburgh Mermaid. It was through her and her cause that I found new purpose. To understand that, we have to go back a few years.

About 10 years ago I began entertaining the idea of running for the PPA Board of Directors. I knew from talking with people who had served on the board that should I ever realize that ambition, the time commitment would increase as the years of service went on. That was fine with me; it fit my plans of slowly downsizing my business, giving me the necessary time.

As I became less busy with the studio work that had kept me occupied for so many years, I stepped back and looked at the big picture, realizing I was so busy making a living, putting out fires, and satisfying customers that I'd lost sight of some important things. I wondered not just what I *could* do to stay busy but what I *should* do. What could I do to make a difference? You might say that satisfying clients for 30-some years does make a difference, and I wouldn't argue against that. But I started thinking more along the lines of things that might inspire others to help affect change in a society so desperate for it.

The past decade of my life has been so full of coincidences that I can't possibly accept they've been random. Meeting Danniella Donahugh nearly eight years ago was one such coincidence. Each of us was going through a dark time that only someone who'd experienced similar circumstances could understand.

We began working together, first to satisfy her need for promotional photos as an actress and then to help expand my creativity in areas like underwater photography. We found we both loved the creative process and soon we were bouncing lots of ideas around.

I knew she'd battled cancer for some time before I met her. Three years ago she was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer. This would have absolutely demolished many people. But as she began round after round of chemo and radiation treatments, she began to focus on people other than herself. She saw people who struggled because they didn't have access to the resources she did, and she was moved to help. She came to me with an idea that wasn't fully formed but was something we both felt had the potential to develop into unique opportunities.

She combined her love of mermaids with her love of Pittsburgh and created the Pittsburgh Mermaid to promote awareness and preventative care as well as to prompt fundraising opportunities to help people in need. She coined her tagline, "Protect your seashells," to help start conversations about a difficult topic. The idea immediately caught the attention of local groups and national fundraising campaigns. She began making appearances at events and creating content to further those efforts.

The work of photographers has always been used to tell stories and promote awareness. What a coincidence that as my career wound down, I was presented with the opportunity to help create images that will inspire people to join this fight.

There are times in our lives when we know we're where we're supposed to be. I'm not sure I've ever felt that as keenly as I do now. Take time from your busy schedule to find something you're passionate about, something that can help make change possible. You'll find rewards that can fulfill you more than you might have thought. •

Mark Campbell owns Prestige Photography in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Sharpen Your Business Mindset



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ON THE COVER

Snaking Through

Stephen Stookey, M.Photosg.

Stephen Stookey Photography

CAMERA & LENS: Canon EOS 5DS R, Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens

EXPOSURE: 0.4 second at f/13, ISO 100

LIGHTING: Natural light

POST-CAPTURE: Stephen Stookey used Adobe Lightroom for raw file conversion and basic adjustments, and Adobe Photoshop and Nik Color Efex Pro 2.0 for cropping and final color and contrast adjustments.



©STEPHEN STOOKEY / stephen-stookey.pixels.com

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NOTE: Lighting diagrams shown here are not to scale.



©ELLEN ZANGLA PHOTOGRAPHY / ellenzanglap photography.com

Approach With Caution

Ellen Zangla, M.Photog., CPP

Ellen Zangla Photography
Hamilton, Virginia

CAMERA & LENS: Canon EOS R5, Canon RF100-500mm F4.5-7.1 L IS USM lens

EXPOSURE: 1/1,600 second at f/7.1, ISO 2500

LIGHTING: Natural light

POST-CAPTURE: Ellen Zangla used Adobe Lightroom for color and tonal corrections, Adobe Photoshop to clean up the background and branch, DxO PureRaw for noise reduction, and NIK Collection filters for additional enhancements.

Kintsugi Eclipse

Andres F. Casallas

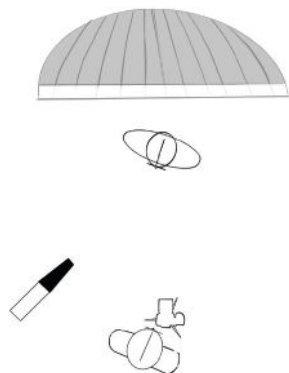
Art by Light Photography
Orlando, Florida

CAMERA & LENS: Canon EOS R6, Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM lens

EXPOSURE: 1/250 second at f/3.5, ISO 125

LIGHTING: Andres F. Casallas used two Godox AD200 flashes, one with a large 6-foot Phottix modifier and a blue gel positioned behind the subject and one with a Westcott Optical Spot by Lindsay Adler as the main light focused on the face.

POST-CAPTURE: Using Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom, he did some skin retouching, contrast adjustments, and refined the crown's appearance to enhance its look.



©ANDRES F. CASALLAS / artbylightphotography.com



©CHERI HAMMON / artbycheri.net

Dahlia Dahling

Cheri Hammon, M.Photog.MEIM.Artist.Cr., CPP, F-ASP

Art By Cheri

Idaho Falls, Idaho

CAMERA & LENS: Samsung cell phone

LIGHTING: Natural light

POST-CAPTURE: Cheri Hammon retouched a few blemishes on the petals in Adobe Photoshop and then brought the image into Nik Collection by DxO for detail enhancements.






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SUCCESS

Great Titles are a Sales Tool

Writing titles for fine art photographs can be a bothersome task. But as ArtBusiness.com points out, a title

can add value to art. It can create interest, give context, and set your work apart from the mass of untitled

images consumers can choose from. To make it easier to write a good title, keep these things in mind. •

KEYWORDS ARE YOUR FRIEND

Relevant and descriptive keywords help prospective buyers who are searching online.

TITLES GUIDE VIEWERS

People are often shy to ask an artist about an image they don't understand. Help out by giving them a place to start the conversation.

PUT YOURSELF OUT THERE

You share your worldview and ideas through your art. Write titles that reflect your thoughts.

MAKE YOUR ART ACCESSIBLE

Titles help people appreciate elements of your images that they might not have noticed.

NAME THE THINGS

Consider using the names of landmarks, locations, plants, animals, and people in the title to help viewers connect the dots.

CRYPTIC TITLES CAN BE INTRIGUING

On the other hand, a good fanciful title can be appealing and invite speculation, causing people to linger over an image.

GALLERIES NEED TITLES

Gallery owners will want to list works that are on display and in marketing materials.

UNTITLED IS UNINTERESTING

Naming an image "Untitled" diminishes your unique point of view and makes it invisible through online searches. You can do better.



Source: "How to Title Your Art," artbusiness.com

Meaningful Contact

EVEN INTROVERTS CAN NETWORK EFFECTIVELY

By Jeff Kent



Learn more from Diane Darling
dianedarling.com

Want to build your business organically, discover valuable professional resources, and earn high-value referrals? Professional networking can help you reach all these goals and more. The benefits of networking are no secret, yet many professionals dread doing it, or they approach it in a disorganized and ineffective manner.

Diane Darling is a speaker, author, and coach who specializes in networking. She's written two books on the topic and works with organizations to help their people form stronger, more productive connections with peers.

Darling explains that effective networking involves more than handing out business cards and keeping a LinkedIn profile updated. With a process and intention, photographers can build a network that yields dividends for years to come.

NETWORKING DEFINED

First, it's important to understand what networking is and what it isn't. It is not a sales pitch. It is not a contact-gathering free-for-all. Networking entails building relationships and establishing trust. Darling defines networking in two ways:

1. Networking is building relationships before you need them. Your network is something to be called on when you need resources, advice, or help. If you wait until you need something to try to establish a relationship, you're already a few steps behind. Think proactively about relationship building.

2. Networking is the transference of trust. When you refer someone from your network, that's a transference of trust. You're telling your contact, I trust this person to do a good job on your project, and so should you. Knowing that your contacts are extending themselves on your behalf, it's important to understand why they would give out your name.

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IT'S FOR EVERYONE

Meeting and engaging with people in a social setting is easier for some people than others. Effective networking doesn't require you to deny your core personality traits, so even introverts can do it. What it does require is that you be able to operate in a social setting. "Embrace your inner introvert, but be a *functioning* introvert," says Darling.

Understand how you're being perceived if you separate yourself. When you hide in the corner because you're shy, people may misinterpret your actions as rude or unwelcoming. If you're feeling self-conscious or anxious, keep in mind that the event you're attending is not about you. Other people are probably feeling the same way you are, and you can do them a great service by engaging with them and helping them emerge from their shells.

ACTION ITEMS

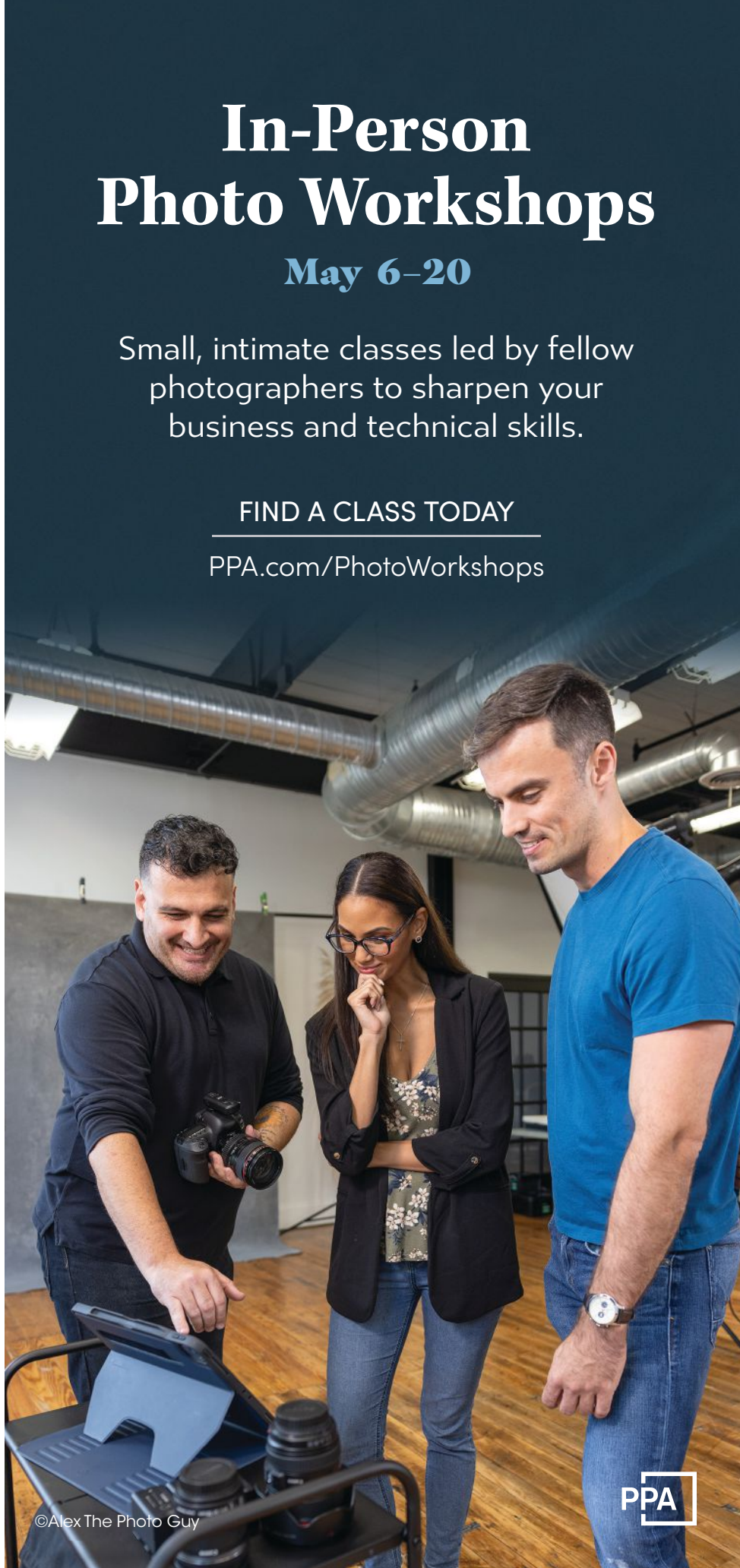
To get the most out of networking efforts, Darling suggests several action items.

Do your research. Prior to attending a conference or networking event, do your homework. Use LinkedIn or other social media, as well as company websites and Google searches, to find professionals who are going to be at the event. Reach out to them in advance to make a connection.

Get involved. Volunteering at an event is a great way to give yourself a sense of purpose. You have a job to do, a reason to be there, and a directive to speak to people about what you're doing at the event.

Ask the first question. If you're at a presentation, when the presenter asks for questions, be the first one to raise your hand. They appreciate it, and it opens doors for follow-up conversations.

Say hello. Walk up to someone and utter the most basic greeting in your language. It's really that simple.





Help others who are struggling. At networking events, seek out people who are standing by themselves and engage them. Invite them to join your group, or if you sense they're uncomfortable in group settings, steer them into one-on-one interactions. If you can help them feel comfortable, they will be grateful.

Have a memorable leave-behind. Yes, you can transmit contact info digitally, but if you hand someone something tactile and memorable, you may stand out more in their memory of the event. Darling carries paper business cards with a QR code that links to networking tips. Photographers could do something similar with a link to a portfolio, a fun behind-the-scenes video, or a list of key services.

Eat sparingly. Even when the food is delicious, remember that you're there to network. Darling recommends getting to events early and inviting someone to have a conversation over food at the beginning of the gathering. Then you can walk around unencumbered to meet people.

Speak to the other person's needs. Instead of talking about what you're look-

ing for, talk about what value you could provide. Talk in terms of how you can help them with what they need.

Think about engagement. You've made an investment to be at an event. Don't let it end with simply showing up. Consider how you engage people. Share tips, knowledge, problem-solving solutions. Figure out different ways to stay engaged and keep the conversation going.

Follow up. Create action items for yourself based on your interactions. Darling likes to categorize the people she's met at an event so she can follow up appropriately:

- People who don't require follow-up
- People she wants to follow up with by offering a resource, connecting them with other people, etc.
- People she can interact with at a later date

"The key is to make an organizational system that works for you," says Darling. "Categorize people in a way that makes sense and then organize your follow-up."

VIRTUAL NETWORKING

Networking opportunities are increasingly

happening online. For virtual meetings, Darling recommends following many of the same principles when it comes to researching contacts, looking for ways to engage, and following up.

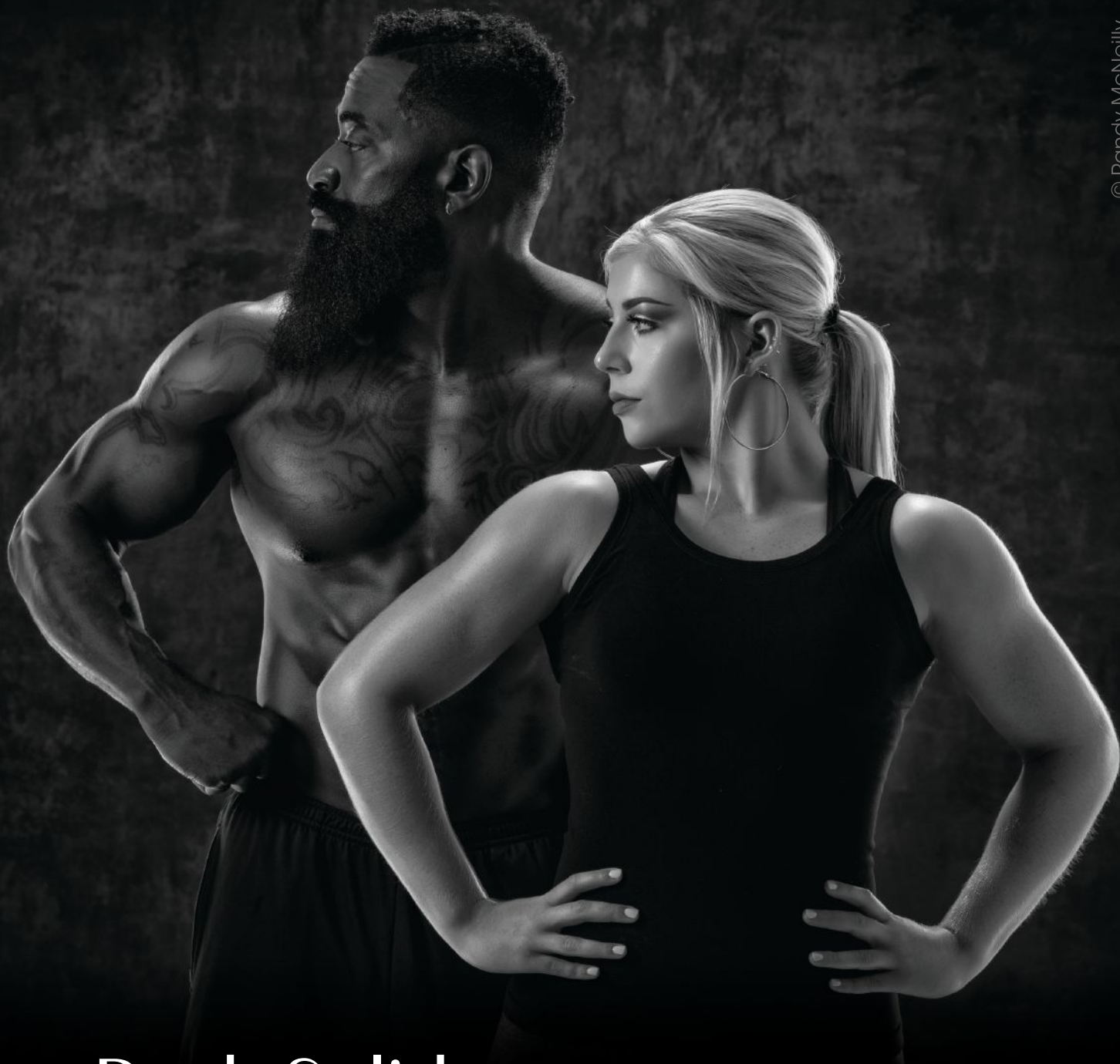
If you're in a virtual meeting with a lot of people, Darling suggests taking a screenshot showing all the attendees so you have a list of everyone in the meeting. Make notes during the meeting about who you'd like to contact for a follow-up. If you want to streamline the process, you could even write a series of messages before the event that you can copy and paste to quickly connect.

It also helps to be noticeable during online meetings. Instead of sitting on mute with her camera off, Darling stays engaged and attentive with her video on. She wears a noticeable red shirt and keeps some artwork or signage with her name on it in the background. When given the opportunity, she asks a question or makes a comment to the group. "I meet everyone there if I ask a question," she says.

GENERATING RESULTS

Networking doesn't always provide a direct route to benefitting your business. Usually, there are twists and turns, but good things tend to come back around when you network with the genuine intention of helping others first. Ask people how you can be a resource for them. Figure out how you can connect others and help people accomplish their goals. When you position yourself as a connector and a resource, the benefits to you ultimately bubble up.

That said, don't be afraid to talk about what you do and what you need from others. Networking should be a mutually beneficial give-and-take. "We're all worried about coming off as needy, but we're in this to make a living," says Darling. Be honest and open about your needs and what a good relationship looks like to you. When you're forthright, it's easier to form genuine connections, and that's when good things happen. •



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From Spec to Special

PERSONAL PROJECTS ENHANCE YOUR VISION AND BOOST YOUR CAREER

By Jeff Kent

IMAGES © ROB GREGORY / robgregoryfilm.com



Feeling stuck creatively? Looking for ways to broaden your client base and open new doors? Spec projects could be a ticket to improving your creative range while strategically moving your photography career in the direction of your choosing.

Spec work is a cornerstone of the career of Chicago-based commercial photographer and film director Rob Gregory, who works with some of the highest-profile brands in America. Since his earliest days in the business, Gregory has used spec work to trigger his imagination and showcase his skills.

“When we create spec work, we aren’t beholden to the same rules and constraints that we have when we are making client work,” he explains. “So we are able to both have fun with it and push boundaries that we might not be able to approach with all these other people analyzing and questioning every aspect of the project.”

Gregory points out that professional photography is a backward industry, in a way. Whether you work in weddings, portraits, or ad campaigns, nobody’s going to hire you to photograph something until you’ve already done it. But how do you photo-

graph something if no one will hire you to do it? To work around that catch-22, stage your own speculative project. If you're just getting started, or if you're established but aren't happy with what you're being hired to photograph, going out and photographing things on your own will help you attract clients for the projects you want.

To maximize your efforts from spec projects, Gregory suggests following five steps.

1. Choose a subject that interests you.

Think about what you're good at and where you want to specialize. Early in Gregory's career, he sat down with a commercial photographer for a portfolio review. During the course of the conversation, that person ended up stripping out everything in Gregory's portfolio except one project, a sports project that demonstrated an innovative approach and a deep understanding of the subject matter. That level of focus made all the difference in Gregory's career development, as he worked toward specializing in sports-themed imagery and created a portfolio fit to attract art directors across the country.

"It's important to find that niche that you can see a little bit better than other people," says Gregory. "And then home in on it. Make that your focus as you develop your body of work."

2. Do something different. Find your niche, and then pick a subject within that niche and go deep. Dive into the research. Immerse yourself in the subject. Think about the sights, the sounds, the colors, the wardrobes, and the personalities involved. Fill your brain with every bit of information you can find on that subject.

"Then, after you've done all that research and you've crammed in every bit of knowledge, walk away from it," suggests Gregory. "Go do something else. All that knowledge will sit in the back





of your brain. While you're out doing something else, the knowledge combines with the new input you're seeing around you. And that's when we start coming up with some truly original ideas."

3. Push it further. Let's say inspiration has struck. You found a niche, you dove deep into a particular subject within that niche, and then you combined all that knowledge with other life experiences to come up with a unique idea. How can you go further? What's the one thing you can do with this idea to push it over the top?

This is the step where you combine your

life experiences with your subject matter expertise to produce something that becomes part of your personal brand, your unique artist's vision. "Keep pushing," urges Gregory. "Take your idea into this special place so when people eventually see the project, it's not going to look like anybody else's. It's yours. It's something that gets it up into a next phase beyond what anybody else is going to do. Because a lot of people stop at a certain point in this process. However, when you take it up to that next level where the concept is fully realized, that is where you start

getting into some really special work.”

4. Market your results. The biggest benefit of spec work is staying relevant in the marketplace. Sometimes, that means putting out work even when you aren't producing client work. “People want to see something new. They want to be entertained when they look at your work,” says Gregory. “Keeping things fresh is part of keeping people excited about your work. Your potential clients are really who you're trying to entertain every time you put out new work.”

When you're trying to work with a specific client or type of client, doing spec work can help illustrate that you're the right photographer for their next project. When targeting commercial clients, think about how you can produce imagery that appeals to their brand, and show how you can take their look in a new direction.

“If you're trying to get in with a specific client, you need to show that you understand their brand in order to attract their attention,” says Gregory. “It's important to be true to you, but make sure you're displaying images that are in their brand voice.” This sometimes means

showing how your work can fit into their plans or help take their plans in a new direction that makes sense for them.

For whatever new market you want to break into, consider the type of imagery that appeals to your target market and produce some spec work that gets you into the conversation. Be true to your artistic voice in a way that shows you understand the clients and what appeals to them.

5. Continue the process. Once you've been through these steps, repeat and continue. Spec work isn't a one-and-done enterprise you should do only at a certain stage in your career. It can be a creative outlet and business development tool at every level.

“Spec work is an important part of being fulfilled in your career and attracting the clients you want to work with,” says Gregory. “It's not a magic thing. You still have to do the work and get out and find the clients. But spec work can help get your photography to a certain level that will help you get in the door, as well as provide a strong foundation for so many other things you want to do in your career.” •



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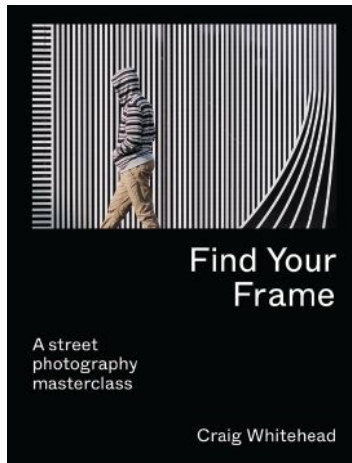
Warm Up to Creative Performance

Artists benefit when they break away from routine and challenge themselves. U.K.-based street photographer Craig Whitehead teaches that creative stretch-

es are similar to warming up before an athletic event. In this excerpt from Whitehead's book, "Find Your Frame: A Street Photography Masterclass," he writes

about how taking warm-up photos works similarly to the way Canadian architect Frank Gehry sparks ideas for his iconic designs by free-form sketching. •

COURTESY THE QUARTO GROUP



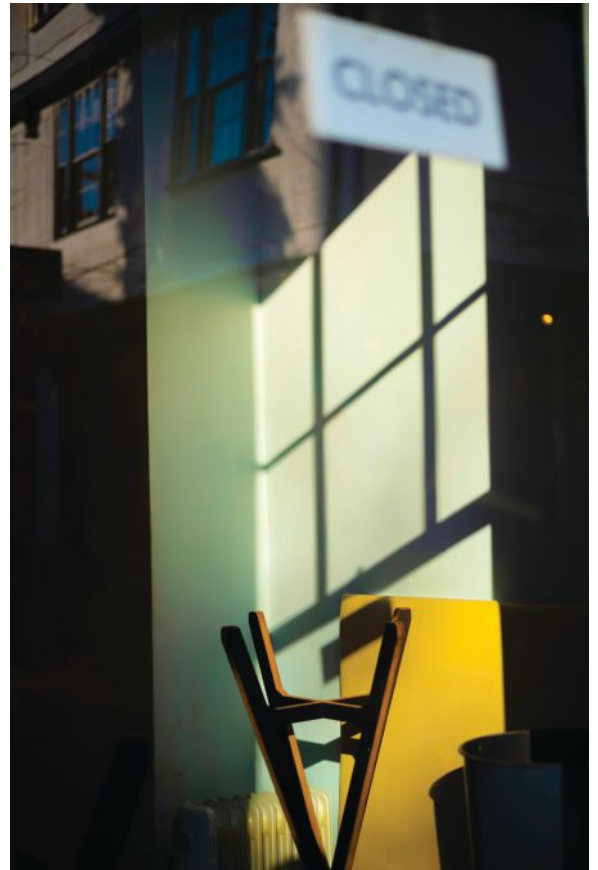
Excerpted with permission from "Find Your Frame: A Street Photography Masterclass" (Frances Lincoln, an imprint of The Quarto Group) by Craig Whitehead.

Gehry's line drawings have dual benefits. On the one hand, they open him up to the possibility of happy accidents and this is probably how he came up with some of his best ideas. But they also avoid the blank canvas feeling that many creatives get. "Blank canvas" might seem an odd reference for a photographer when the world is out there offering itself up to be recorded, but we can undergo something similar. Luckily, we're living in the digital age, so we can take thousands of pictures at relatively little cost ...

So, crack on. If you shoot a dud picture, it's no loss, you can just review it, delete it, and retake it ... Think of yourself as a runner about to hit the track for the 100m final or an actor about to go on stage in the finale of a sold-out run. These test shots are your

star jumps and stretches or your blocking and vocal exercises. I did the same thing when I was studying illustration—I'd just start making marks on paper. Sometimes it's good to set yourself a challenge. Like drawing with your non-dominant hand, you could start shooting with your aperture wide open. This all helps your brain to get into the right mode to take great pictures—it would be foolish to go straight into it ...

If I'm walking around a scene that I've seen many times, on a street I go down every day, it can be hard to lift a camera to shoot something unless it is completely out of the ordinary. My standards have been raised so high that if something's not spectacular, I don't even shoot it. Take it from me that this is a terrible habit and one that goes against my own advice! I sometimes need to remind myself to loosen up and keep experimenting ... You always want to keep pushing yourself to make better work than you've made in the past. •



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Enormous Potential

REVIEW: NIKKOR Z 135MM F/1.8 S PLENA LENS

By Ellis Vener



Pros

- Large aperture
- Sharpness
- Image characteristics
- Speedy autofocus
- Beautiful bokeh
- No focus drift between wide open and tighter apertures

Cons

- High price
- Large size and weight
- Lack of vibration reduction



COURTESY NIKON / nikonusa.com

Nikon's new Plena lens is in hot demand, and for good reason. Primarily marketed to portrait photographers, the Nikkor Z 135mm f/1.8 S Plena has capabilities that extend far beyond portraiture. If you are a Nikon Z user looking to make your work stand out from your competitors, I can think of worse ways to part with nearly \$2,500.

The Plena is only the second Nikkor lens in the company's century-plus history to be given an official name, indicating Nikon views the Plena as something special. They are right. Like the Nikkor Z 58mm f/0.95 S Noct, the Plena is a big-bodied lens engineered to let in a lot of light. Rooted in the Latin word "plenus," meaning full, the Plena name fits this lens in many ways.

Built around 16 elements in 14 groups, with some internal surfaces using Nikon's ARNEO and Meso Amorphous coatings, the lens allows light to flow through in a torrent. Bokeh fans will love the circular highlights formed by combining large-diameter elements and 11 curved-edged aperture blades. The design of lenses longer than 100mm usually includes a vibration-reducing set of elements in the light path, but that's not the case here. Most likely the trade-off was a balance between achieving the maximum amount of light through the lens, optimal optical characteristics, and additional size and weight versus the benefits of steadier images at very low shutter speeds. The Plena takes 82mm filters, a size coming into common use by multiple lens makers. Autofocus duties are handled swiftly and accurately by a pair of Nikon's STM stepping motors with 2.69 feet as the minimum focus distance in both auto and manual (focus by wire) modes.

In the FX (full-frame) format, the diagonal angle of view is 18°10'. The Plena is designed for the 24x36mm FX format,

but when used with the 16x24mm DX format, it's effectively a 202mm f/1.8 lens, making the Plena even *more* ideal for outdoor portraits, indoor sports, and theatrical work. When used on a 45-megapixel FX camera like the Nikon

Z 8, Z 9, and Z 7 series bodies, the combination of outstanding sharpness even when wide open, plus the crop-friendly size of a high-resolution camera's native image quality and pixel density, make the Plena a viable alternative to the well-

regarded Nikon Z 70-200mm f/2.8 VR S lens, which is 1 1/3 stops slower, larger, heavier, and nearly as expensive.

The Plena is as free of chromatic aberrations and geometric distortions as I've seen in a high-end short telephoto lens,



IMAGES © ELLIS VENER / ellisvener.com



The Nikon Z 135mm f/1.8 Plena excels as a portrait lens. I made the image above left in intense backlight, handholding the camera at desk height and using the monitor on the Nikon Z 8 as a waist-level viewfinder. The closeup portrait (left) was captured indoors in available light. I set the Nikon Z 8 to matrix metering mode and eye detection AF, and auto white balance. Above, the light strings show the gorgeous bokeh of Plena captures.



The Plena excels in available light for candid street photography style portraiture. I made this trio of portraits in quick succession at the Old Fourth Ward Skate Park in Atlanta toward the end of an overcast day.

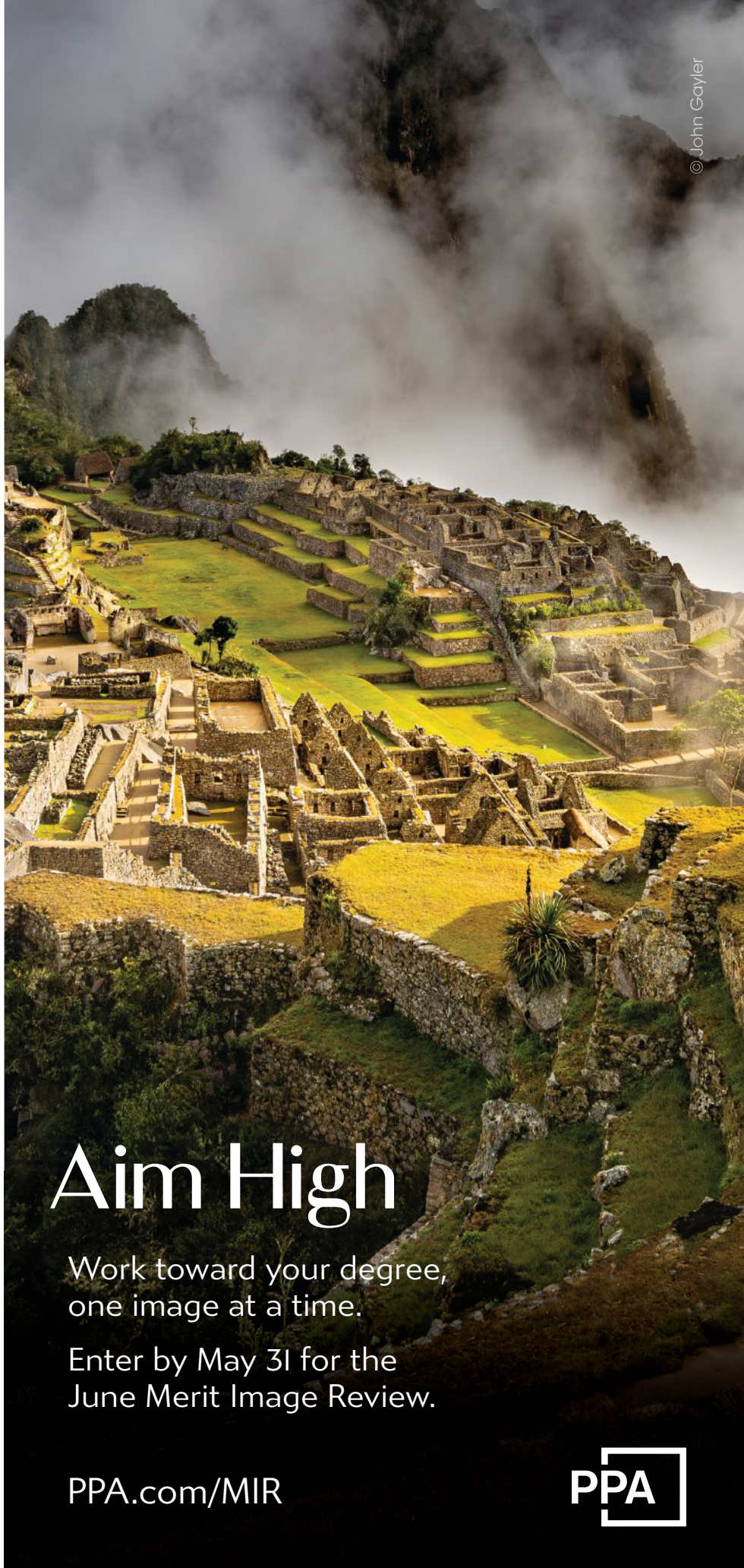


except for those designed to be flat-field macro lenses. At $f/1.8$ there is a trace of center-to-corner falloff in brightness, but this disappears by $f/3.5$. Unlike lenses that suffer from focus drift as you stop down from wide open, the Plena's focus remains exactly where you put it, even at the closest focus distance. Another noteworthy feature is the gentle gradation in sharpness from the point of focus outward, whether the aperture is wide open or stopped down. These qualities, alongside the smooth and unobtrusive bokeh, make the Plena an outstanding portrait lens.

There's no downplaying the size of this lens. It is big. At 5.5x3.9 inches, the Plena is only a tenth of an inch shorter than the width of a Z 8, Z 7, Z 6, or Z f body. At 35.1 ounces, it's a full 3 ounces heavier than the 2-pound Z 8. On the other hand, it's much shorter, only a little fatter, and significantly lighter than any 70-200mm $f/2.8$. It's noticeably sharper, and as previously noted, it's a full $1\frac{1}{3}$ stop faster when wide open.

Despite the Plena's mass and overall size, the distribution of weight makes it comfortable for both handheld and tripod-supported shooting. For videography, an under-the-lens support will improve balance for panning and tilting with the camera on a tripod, but that's true for all long lenses, especially once you add filters and a matte box and accessories like a cage, external media, and monitors.

This lens is primed to perform anytime you need a short, sharp, sweet telephoto with a large maximum aperture. With a high-resolution camera, the Plena can replace a 70-200mm $f/2.8$ for most uses if you're not opposed to cropping an image. On rare occasions, a camera maker will develop a lens good enough to be worthy of investing in the brand's cameras. The Nikkor Z 135mm $f/1.8$ S Plena is one of those lenses. •



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7 Instant Film Tricks

LESSONS TO MASTER

By Loreal Byers



Instant film photography introduces on-the-spot glee and excitement to your clients, tapping into nostalgia and appreciation for the art that is photography. In recent years I've started incorporating Polaroid photography into all my sessions. It's a relatively low-cost medium with a big emotional payoff.

Instant film has been around for ages, but it can be a finicky medium. I've learned many lessons—sometimes the hard way—along my journey. These tips and tricks will help you make the most of the Polaroid experience for yourself and those in front of your camera.

1. Go to the Light

This type of photography does best in well-lit areas. Your greatest results will be in full sun, but you can still capture a good image in less light. Some modern instant film cameras have settings for indoor use, shade, or partial sun. Even a few of the vintage models offer slight exposure compensation dials. If you plan on doing most of your photography indoors, opt for a camera that offers those additional settings.

Be conscious of your light source. If you backlight your subject, you can expect a nice silhouette most of the time. If you want to keep the subject entirely visible, have them facing the sun or your light source. When in doubt, use your flash. Keep in mind that the flash fall-off is quick. Get

close if you know your subject needs to be lit. A distance around 3 to 5 feet will allow the light to reach your subject without entirely blowing them out.

2. Shield Developing Film

Yes, the song says shake it like a Polaroid picture, but don't do that. Instant film can be extremely sensitive to light, so leave the print alone and stow it in a dark place immediately after it ejects so that it can develop evenly and correctly. Some camera models have a built-in film shield that jackets the photo when it first exits the camera, or you may be able to buy one to install yourself. Otherwise stow the photo in a loose pocket, face down on a flat surface, or better yet, inside a shoebox or similar container.

3. Understand the Camera

Typically, instant film cameras have a set focus and lens. Sometimes moving a certain distance from your subject will change the focus depth to match your intentions. Knowing the specifics of your camera will help you better execute your vision. Part of the joy of instant film photography is that you have to find your creativity within the limitations set by the camera.

4. Learn to Change Out Packs

It's possible to change out some film packs mid-use when, for example, you're using color film but want to change to

black and white. Get a dark-room bag, which is a light-proof bag used for changing film anywhere, and save a dark slide—the cover that ejects after you first load a new pack of film into your camera—and keep it handy. Place the entire camera in the darkroom bag to start the process. Inside the bag, use the dark slide to cover your remaining film images in the film cartridge by placing it back over the top. Practice placing the dark slide into an empty film cartridge outside of the bag a few times until you feel confident you can do it inside the bag.

5. Don't Trust the Viewfinder

Instant film cameras tend to have viewfinders that are essentially just you looking straight through them at the subject instead of a mirrored design that sees through the lens. They're usually above the lens and off to the side, making the viewfinder's perspective offset from that of your lens. Keep this in mind while framing your image. The closer you are to your subject, the bigger difference you'll notice if you don't compensate. If your viewfinder sits above and to the left of the lens, offset your composition slightly up and left. This is a trial-and-error process, so it's better to under-correct while learning your camera.

6. Factor in Temperature

Temperature plays a big role in how the film develops and

keeps. Store film in a dry and cool place. It's OK to store sealed film in the fridge as long as you lay it flat. This keeps the chemistry steady and at its production level of quality. Note the expiration date, and try to use it within the intended time frame. Temperature also matters in use. Instant film tends to operate best in moderate temps, about 55 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. If it's colder you may notice a green/cyan tint to your images and in hotter temperatures, a red/orange tint. To combat colder temperatures, hold the ejected photo close to your person to utilize your body heat. In hotter conditions, consider bringing along an insulated bag that has been kept in a cool place.

7. Be Intentional

Film packs typically carry eight or 10 exposures, but it's more than enough for a typical session. The beauty and allure of film is the challenge to anticipate and choose a moment rather than clicking away nonstop.

These tips should get your wheels turning and help you prepare to add instant film photography to your mix. Fully read the manual for your instant film camera to get familiar with its specific functionality, and embrace the happy accidents. •

Loreal Byers owns Heartstring Heirlooms in Indianapolis, Indiana.



FILM OPTIONS

Polaroid and Fujifilm are the main contributors to the instant film world. Several instant film formats are accessible to the public: Fujifilm Instax Mini and Instax Wide, and Polaroid i-Type Film, Go Film, 600 Film, and SX-70 Film. Some formats offer a vintage look with softer focus and color versus others that appear more modern with sharper results and more contrast. They also vary in photo dimensions, exposure count per pack, and cost per image. Experimenting with different kinds of film will help you determine which best complements your professional work.

What's New to Help You?

ADOBE LIGHTROOM CLASSIC UPDATES

By Theano Nikitas

One of the benefits of software subscription models like Adobe's is being able to access new features and improvements on a timely basis. These periodic updates are often minor, so it's easy to accidentally overlook an update that's more significant. Take a look at these new developments in Lightroom Classic that could improve your editing process.

DENOISE

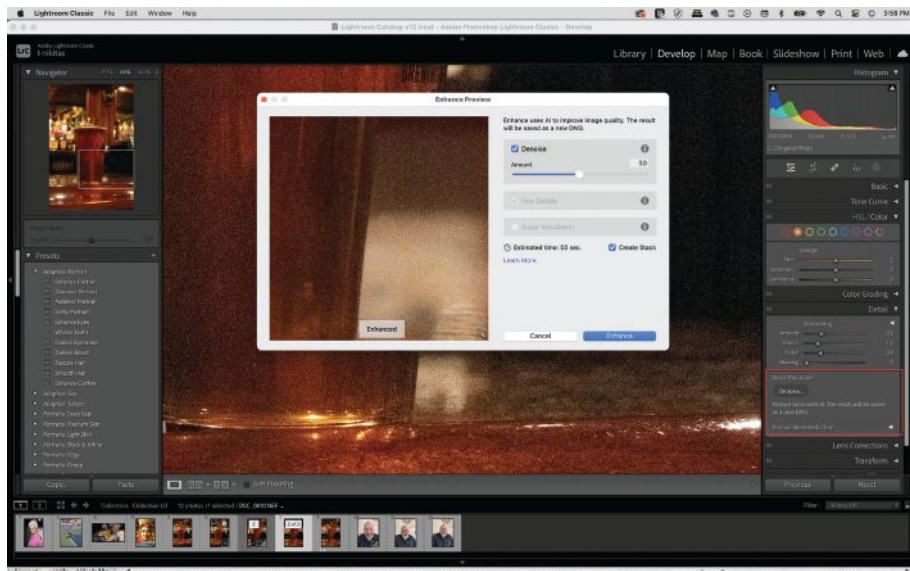
This AI-powered feature gives you an alternative to Lightroom Classic's noise reduction tool, which is now at the bottom of the Details panel and called Manual Noise Reduction. The new Denoise is more effective at removing noise while maintaining fine details. Currently, this feature is only compatible with

raw image files, with some exceptions such as the smaller-than-full-resolution sRAW files from Canon and S NEF files from Nikon, among other restrictions. It should be available for other file formats in the future. The process is one-and-done, producing a separate DNG file. Denoise is greyed out in the menu if you try to re-process a denoised DNG file. The original raw file is retained along with a new DNG file created after Denoise has been applied.

It's preferable to use Denoise prior to other edits to avoid possible interactions with other processes, especially AI-driven functions such as Select Subject or Context Aware Remove.

Here's how to put Denoise into action:

1. Open an image (or multiple images by selecting them in the Filmstrip) and head to Develop > Details.
2. Click Denoise. When the Enhance Preview dialog box opens, click on the preview window to see before and after versions. If needed, use the amount slider to apply more or less noise reduction (the default is set at 50).
3. Leave Create Stack checked to keep the before and after pictures together. The processed DNG file name will be appended with "Enhanced-NR."
4. To the left of Create Stack, you'll see the estimated amount of time for the image(s) to be processed. Once you're satisfied with the Denoise results, click Enhance. A progress bar appears in the upper left of the screen.
5. Hold the Alt (Windows) or Option (Mac) key when you click Denoise to reset the slider to the previously used intensity level.
6. Optional: If your image appears too smooth, you can go to the Effects panel and add some grain.



AI-powered Denoise is more effective at removing noise while maintaining fine detail than the previous tool, which is now called Manual Noise Reduction.

PEOPLE MASKING

Adobe has added new Portrait Adaptive Presets and two new Select People masks for facial hair and clothing. For each, there are two methods to automatically create subject-specific masks.

To create a mask using Adaptive Presets in the Develop module:

1. Open the presets panel on the left-hand side of the screen and click the down arrow of Adaptive: Portrait.
2. Click Darken Beard. Then click the masking icon in the right-hand panel.

To create a mask using Select People in the Develop module:

1. Choose the masking icon, then click the people icon. The software automatically recognizes the people in the image.
2. Click the thumbnail of the person whose facial hair you want to adjust. (If there's more than one person in the scene, Lightroom provides a thumbnail for each; choose your preferred subject.)

3. Click Facial Hair from the Person Mask Options, then click Create Mask.

For either method:

1. In the upper right of the main window, a small masking panel indicates the portions of the image that were automatically masked. Make sure to check Show Overlay to visualize the mask.
2. Use the Add/Subtract options in the masking panel to tweak the selection if needed.
3. Use the Exposure and Amount sliders to increase or decrease darkness of the subject's facial hair.
4. You can adjust contrast and texture tools to refine the look of the subject's beard/mustache.
5. Optional: Both methods can also be used to adjust the color intensity



The Adaptive: Portrait presets are one of two methods available to create subject-specific masks for elements such as facial hair.



To use the Select People method, begin by choosing the masking icon in the right panel of the Develop module and click the people icon to have it recognize people in the image.



The Refine Saturation slider lets you decrease or increase the change in saturation that often occurs when using the Point Curve. Once adjustments are made, just head to the bottom of the panel to find the Refine Saturation slider.

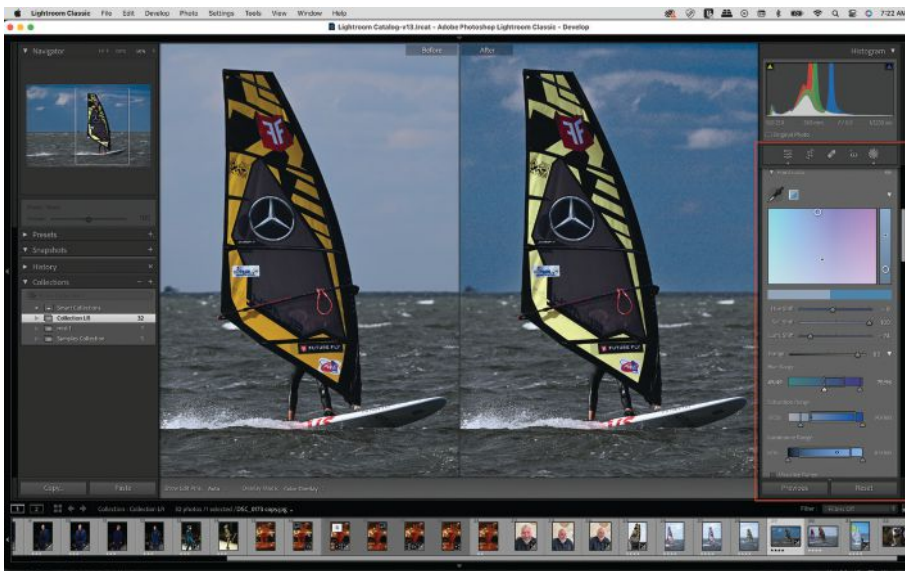
of the subject's clothes or to change a garment's color. Just choose Enhance Clothes or Clothes from the respective menus.

CURVES

There are a few new simple but useful options in Curves. The Refine Saturation slider provides a way to decrease or increase the change in saturation that often occurs when using the Point Curve, especially when setting the black point.

1. Go to the Tone Curve Panel and select Point Curve (the second button from the left).
2. Make your Point Curve adjustments. At the bottom of the panel, use the new Refine Saturation slider to decrease/increase saturation.

Also new is the ability to apply Curves adjustments to a masked area of an image. Just select the area you want to adjust, head over to the Tone Curve panel, and you're good to go.



Now you can apply a mask when working in Curves and apply those adjustments to specific areas of an image. Here I selected and made changes to the sky and then to the colors of the sail.

HUE, SATURATION, LUMINANCE

Adobe has added a quick and easy way to isolate colors in an image, which is helpful when you want to adjust a specific color and see exactly what areas that adjustment will affect. Hold the Alt (Windows) or Option (Mac) key and click on the hue slider for, for example, the color blue (be careful not to move the slider). All areas of the image that contain blue will show as blue while the remainder of the image is shown as black-and-white so you can see what parts of the photo will be affected when you adjust the blue slider. •

Theano Nikitas is a photographer and freelance writer covering the photo industry.

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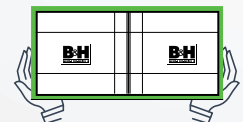


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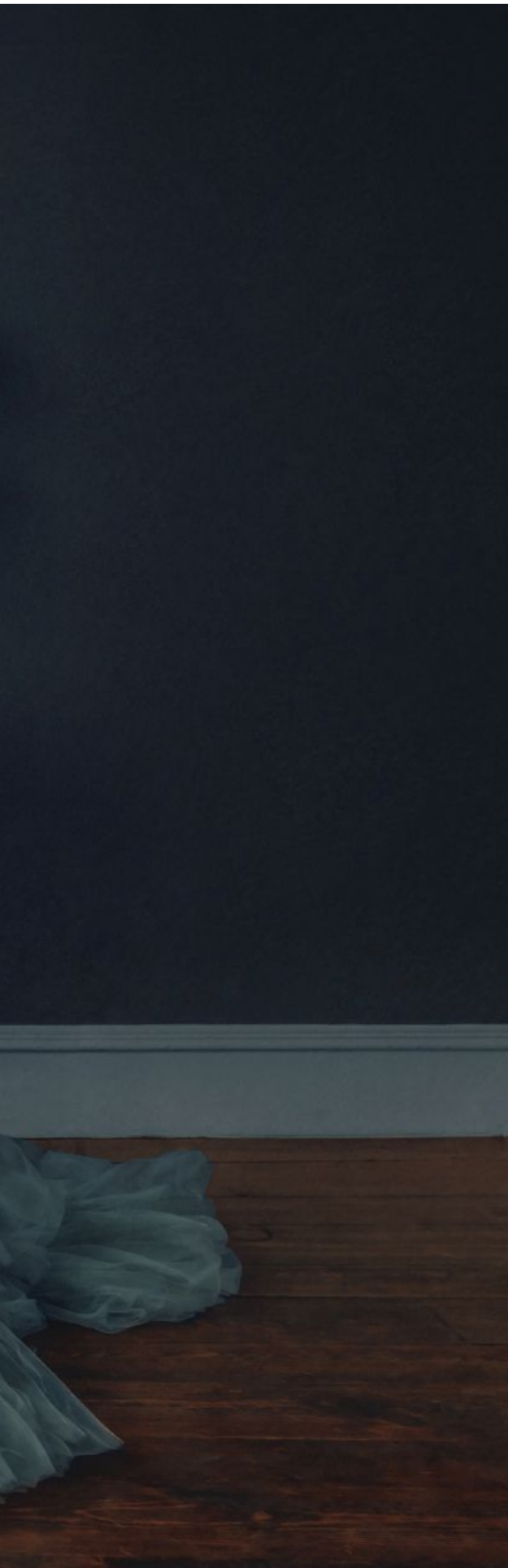
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MODERN
PORTRAITS
INSPIRED BY
THE OLD MASTERS

BY STEPHANIE BOOZER





When it comes to describing her work, Holly Lund doesn't like the word "painterly," but laughs when she can't find a better word to describe it. Her portraits combine a serene mix of old-world lighting and composition with subtle modern twists. There's a strong emphasis on the way light plays across the contours of clothing, hair, and skin, and in some instances, the line between painting and photography blurs. However, Lund does not apply paint to her portraits.

Lund's aesthetic was forged early: While studying art history in college, she wrote a thesis on the portraiture of Marie Antoinette. "I loved the single-subject portraiture of the 1700s and 1800s," she says. "Anytime I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York I would spend hours in the European portrait galleries. I loved studying the lighting and posing and have pulled a lot of inspiration from those pieces."

Based on the Jersey Shore, Lund is a low-volume portrait artist focused on creating museum-grade, archival prints guaranteed to last for generations. Her work is primarily of children and young adults, with families in the mix. Her friends were bemused by Lund's inclination to photograph children, and they weren't alone.

"It really was surprising because I had no idea initially that I wanted to work with kids," she says. "Once I started working with children, I found that it was actually therapeutic for me in a way.

I could escape everyday life and be a kid again, see the world through their eyes."

SUBTLE STORYTELLING

Often dressed in vintage-inspired garb, sometimes with whimsical wigs and accessories, the children in Lund's portraits are calm and serene in expression, though occasionally displaying a more dramatic gaze, with soft eyes and the ghost of a smile. She follows the example of the early days of photography and painted portraiture, when full smiles were not the norm because the long exposures made holding a smile both impractical and uncomfortable.

"I've never told a kid to smile for these portraits," she says. "I want to capture their natural expression, relaxed and clear-headed."

Getting the kids' buy-in requires building trust. And because her business model is not built on repeat business, providing something unique and meaningful to the family requires a time investment. She talks with her subjects to learn about their internal dynamics, unique qualities, and details she might build into a story. Like many of the old-world portraits that spark her imagination, Lund often incorporates an element of symbolism into her images. She may use a family heirloom or object that's meaningful to the family or the child, such as a flower or a color that's symbolic in some way.

"I want the portraits to look cohesive in their homes, but it's more about who



HOLLY LUND



“My clients are here because they resonate with me, with this style, and they trust me to create this once-in-a-lifetime portrait.”

they are,” she says. “Not everyone looking at it is going to know there is something so special and meaningful to the family, but it’s there.”

One parent shared that her children’s grandfather had recently passed away. She and the children wanted a dragonfly-embellished locket incorporated into the portrait, a small visual cue that represented his personality. Perhaps no one else looking at the photograph would focus on that detail, but the family will always appreciate it.

CAPTURE TO PRINT

Lund prefers to work with children five and older, as they’re better able to pay attention and follow direction. To win their trust, she connects with them multiple times pre-session so that by the time they’re in front of her camera, they don’t perceive her as a stranger making demands on them. She’s established a comfort level and involved them in the process of creating the portrait, incorporating their input and personality into wardrobe, accessories, and the overall feel. She offers them plenty of breaks, sometimes helps them release tension with mini dance parties, and sets them at ease by asking them to close their eyes and take a deep breath now and then.

Immediately after each session, Lund does a quick cull of her favorite photos, then clients choose the images they’re interested in. They then decide on the final artwork style and finish, and Lund moves directly into editing and retouching. It’s important to her that the final portraits stand the test of time, so she works with labs that can produce archival-quality prints to create a product with the longevity that rivals portraits found in historic homes and museums. Large wall art is her primary final product.

“A lot of photographers tell me they’re scared to get into selling wall art,” says Lund. “What I’m doing isn’t really selling because I love it so much. I picked products that I love, and just the way I talk about them sells them because of that love, not me being a weird used-car salesperson. My clients are here because

they resonate with me, with this style, and they trust me to create this once-in-a-lifetime portrait.”

MENTORING DONE RIGHT

Lund’s standout style also attracts other photographers hoping to learn her approach, which has gradually nudged her into teaching and sharing her techniques. Often, they come to her for editing tips, but she’s quick to point out that her process involves more than just editing. While she draws lighting inspiration from historic portraits of yore, she explains that the feeling evoked by a portrait comes from the lighting and editing as well as

the overall purpose and vision of the story an image communicates.

“I don’t want to teach people how to copy what I do,” says Lund. “Instead, I try to dive into where *they* draw inspiration from. It’s so important to be authentically you. Finding your niche means finding the niche within you. Don’t choose a style because it’s trendy or even because it’s beautiful. Take the different things that resonate with you and apply them, and inevitably that will help you create your own style.”

But recognizing your inspirations and knowing how to apply them can be difficult. To push past that mental block, Lund leads a brief exercise among the







groups she mentors. She asks each person to quickly say one thing that inspires them. In round two, she asks them to name something that's unrelated to their first answer. "Don't think, just say it," she instructs. For the third round, they combine both answers and explain how they could be woven into a story that's uniquely theirs.

"In the first round a lot of people will name their kids," she says. "But the second round will bring out something different."

Lund says that while she's teaching the how of technique and process, she's also teaching the why. She wants photographers to piece together tips and techniques they learn from multiple instructors to create their own voice and vision.

It's how she learned early on, drawing on her initial portrait inspirations and finding other photographers whose work she admired. She wanted to see how they did what they did and then evolve those techniques into something unquestionably hers—an eclectic, historical-inspired brand of portraiture that's also modern.

"I'm creating something that's fulfilling both me and my clients," says Lund. "This work gives me hope and is my outlet. At the end of the day, this is me. And I know I'm doing something right when, at the end of the session, the kids hug me goodbye." •

Stephanie Boozer is a writer in Charleston, South Carolina.



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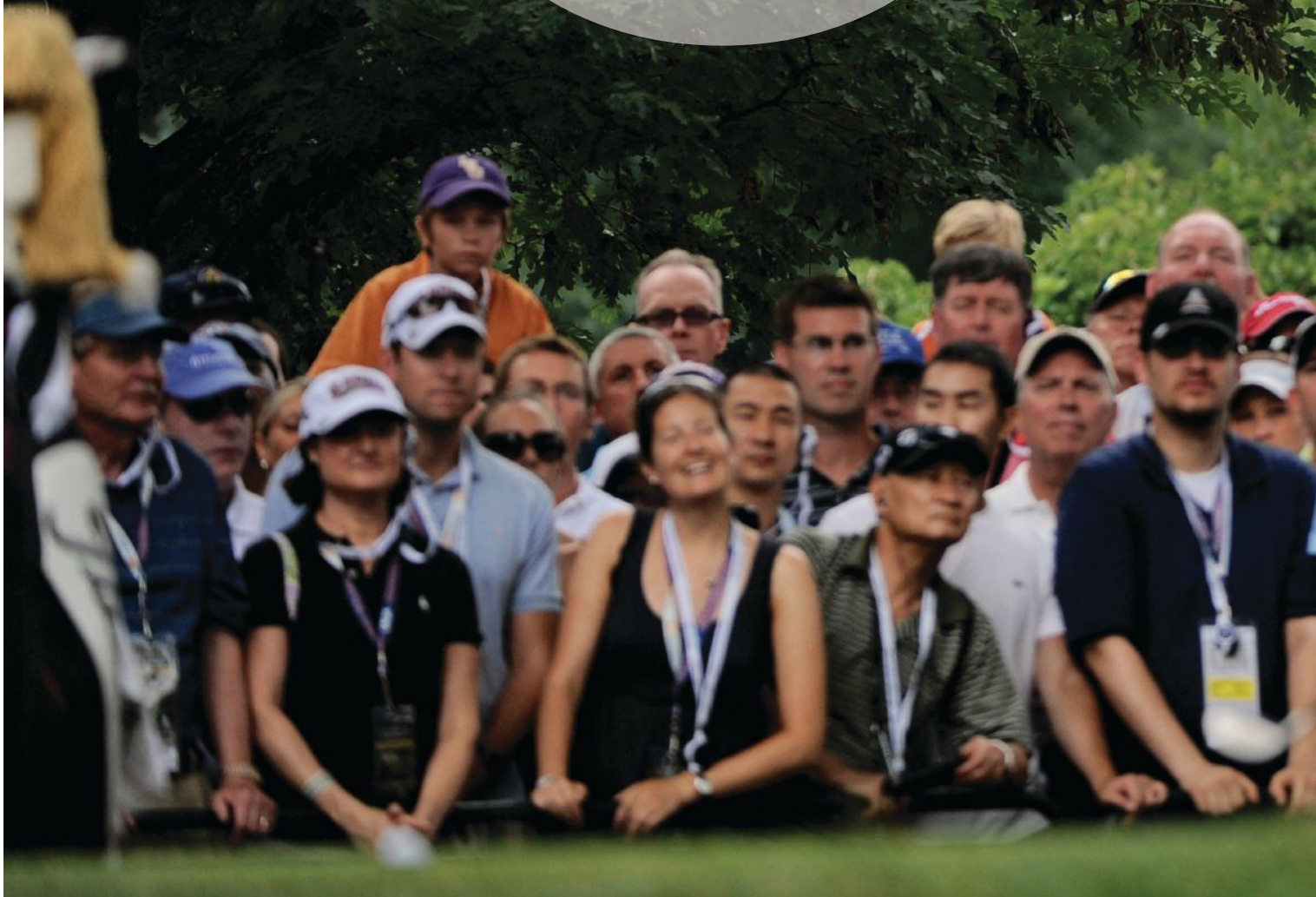
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SINKING THE

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STEPHEN SZURLEJ
IS A MASTER AT
BEING IN THE RIGHT
PLACE AT THE
RIGHT TIME

BY ROBERT KIENER





Stephen Szurlej, center, with camera, has covered more than 400 PGA Tour events and championships throughout the world during his 30-year career.





It was a brilliantly sunny August day in Akron, Ohio. Golf photographer Stephen Szurlej, who had been following Tiger Woods outpacing the competition at the World Golf Championship, was planning his next shot. Woods, long one of Szurlej's favorite subjects, hammered a monster tee shot, and his ball came to rest in the high rough just off the fairway of the Firestone Country Club. As the course marshals set up a rope to keep the approaching crowds out of Woods' way, Szurlej made his move.

"I hurried to a spot about 12 feet in front of Tiger's ball and well off to his right, just outside the rope," he remembers. "I laid down in the tall grass out of his line of sight and was confident he couldn't see me or hear me when I would squeeze off a few shots. The last thing I wanted to do was disturb him or make a noise. That's one of golf photography's biggest sins."

So far, so good. After the crowds lined up quietly behind the ropes

and Woods, who had chosen a long iron for his next shot, surveyed the course, Szurlej aimed his Canon EOS-1D X Mark II at the golfer he had photographed thousands of times. After Woods made his picture-perfect swing, which Szurlej captured, a divot sailed through the air directly at the photographer. The crowd erupted in laughter.

"Hit me right in the face," admits Szurlej with a broad smile. "Even I had to laugh." Woods, who had known Szurlej for more than a decade, acted as if nothing had happened. Then, as he walked by Szurlej, who was busy brushing the grass and sod from his face and hair, Woods stopped, looked down and said, "That was pretty good wasn't it?"

"That blew me away," says Szurlej. "I had to laugh. I figured he had never even seen me as I was hidden by the high grass." Woods took another few steps, turned back and laughed again, adding, "You know, I was aiming for you!"



STEPHEN SZURLEJ

LUCK AND LESSONS

Spend any time with award-winning golf and sports photographer Stephen Szurlej, and you're likely to hear plenty of stories like this. They feature the legions of golf greats he has photographed and come to know during his more than four decades behind a camera. Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Seve Ballesteros, Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, and many more golf as well as tennis greats fill the portfolio of the now-retired 74-year-old.

During his 30-year career as a senior staff photographer for *Golf Digest* and *Golf World* magazines, Szurlej covered more than 400 PGA Tour events and championships throughout the world. For his efforts, he was awarded the 2023 PGA of America's Lifetime Award in Photojournalism. As PGA President John Lindert said, "Stephen set the standard for golf photography through his masterful artistic ability and relentless work ethic." Longtime friend and fellow golf photographer Dom Furore puts it more simply: "If your life depended on somebody coming back with a certain shot, I'd send Steve. He's just *that good!*"

Szurlej graduated from Bowling Green State University with a bachelor's degree in journalism in 1971, and although he'd only taken three undergraduate courses in photography, he fell in love with the field and eventually landed a job as a staff photographer with the *News-Times* newspaper in Danbury, Connecticut.

"I was lucky in a couple of ways," he remembers. "I had the time, and editors lenient enough, to let me learn on the job. Also, because we were close to New York City I had the opportunity to shoot a wide variety of professional sports events. That's how I got hooked on sports."

In 1980, after five years with the paper and freelancing, he was

hired as *Golf Digest's* first staff photographer. "Again, the gods were looking out for me," he remembers. "Someone at the magazine liked my work and gave me my big break."

"I had so much to learn," he explains. "Photographing golf is unlike photographing any other sport. It has its own set of rules, restrictions, and needs. For example, there is the requirement that you have to be quiet and not make a move that might disturb a player. While a golfer is swinging, you can hear a pin drop. Compare that with the NBA when a player is shooting a free throw and much of the crowd is going crazy, yelling at him at the top of their lungs. It's a different world."

He quickly learned a bagful of tricks of the trade to help him cope. "The guys that photographed golf back then were part of a very small fraternity, the same 15 or so guys who did this every week. We all looked out for one another, and I learned so much from them."

Tips included advice on using a long lens, photographing parts of a golfer's swing before impact, covering the camera with a cloth sound blimp to quiet it down, making sure the wind was blowing in the right direction and camera noise wouldn't carry, and staying out of a player's line of sight.

"And there was strategy," says Szurlej. "There is so much a new golf photographer has to learn about the strategy of planning your shots." For example, a photographer has to be in position, set up, and quiet before a player arrives at the ball for their shot. That takes planning.

It's also important to know course layouts. "Many of the major championships are held on the same course year after year," he explains. "So you need to know which holes

(continued on p. 65)





“Photographing golf is unlike photographing any other sport. It has its own set of rules, restrictions, and needs.”



(continued from p. 62)

are more likely to give up a birdie or an eagle, and you have to be ready and in position to get the shot you need on those holes.”

He remembers covering golfing great Seve Ballesteros (“the Arnold Palmer of Europe”) when he was playing in the 1980 Masters Tournament at Augusta, Georgia. “I knew the 8th hole at Augusta is a long uphill par five and Seve would have a good chance of birdying it. He was an emotional guy and I figured he’d react if he did,” he explains. “Once he played his approach shot, I realized he might even get an eagle. Then I ran like heck—and you’re not supposed to run at Augusta—all the way to the green to be in the right position. He got his eagle, eventually won the Masters, and I got my shot!”

LINE UP FOR SUCCESS

According to Szurlej, being a successful golf photographer is about being in the right place at the right time. “I suppose that’s true about all photography,” he says. “But there’s more. On a golf course you also have to figure out exactly where that right place is going to be.”

There’s no better example of this preplanning than Szurlej’s famous image of Tiger Woods on the 16th hole at the final round of the 2005 Masters. The 16th is a par three, and Woods’ tee shot landed to the left of the green. He’d left himself with a tricky chip shot onto the green. Szurlej knew the hole well—he’d covered the Masters at Augusta the previous 25 years—and knew just where he’d have to position himself to get a shot of Woods chipping toward him.

“Tiger is famous for his emotive reactions,” says Szurlej. “I wanted to be in just the right spot to catch his reaction, so I went to the right side of the green.” But there was

a problem. Hundreds of golf fans were surrounding the green and he knew they’d go wild if Woods chipped in for a birdie. Because he feared the crowd’s upraised arms could block his shot, he found the highest piece of ground behind the gallery, raised his monopod and Canon EOS-1D Mark II as high as he could, and focused on Woods.

“Thank God I was in the right spot,” says Szurlej. “The ball hung on the lip of the hole for a second and the crowd, and Tiger, went wild after it dropped into the cup” (pages 60-61). With his camera high in the air, Szurlej got his shot of Woods screaming in delight, one that has been dubbed one of golf’s all-time-great iconic images.

While he is justifiably proud of his much-praised image of Woods, Szurlej is quick to explain that there is another contributing factor to a winning image. “It’s luck,” he admits with a smile. “No matter how well-prepared you are, you also need to be lucky.”



He recalls another Masters moment when he again had positioned himself perfectly near the 18th green at Augusta. It was 2004. Szurlej knew that Phil Mickelson, after playing in 46 majors without a win, needed only to sink an 18-foot birdie putt to clinch his first Masters title. The popular player was long overdue for a win.

“Reaction shots are everything in golf photography, and I knew Phil Mickelson and the crowd would go crazy if he sunk this putt,” says Szurlej. “I got to the green in plenty of time and positioned myself right in line to shoot the putt and, hopefully, Phil’s reaction.”

“Just as I had hoped, Mickelson sunk his putt and went wild. He jumped three feet—three feet!—into the air but he had turned away from me. All I got was a picture of his backside. No face, just his butt! Win some, lose some.” •

Robert Kiener is a writer in Vermont.

The Value of



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Vision



STEVEN SEIDENBERG
SHARES HIS UNIQUE VOICE

BY JEFF KENT

Steven Seidenberg began using photography as an expression of his visual art. He approached it through the lens of a painter, using the camera as an immediate and realistic way to explore abstraction. Over time, Seidenberg's fine art photography has evolved to include a variety of series that examine intriguing repetitions found in the built environ-

ment. While photography is just one tool in Seidenberg's artistic quiver, his experiences in the medium have led to insights that could apply across different disciplines and to a variety of professional photographic specialties, especially when it comes to defining a unique artistic vision in the saturated photographic market.

UNIQUE MATERIAL CONDITIONS

When examining what different artists can learn from each other—and how those lessons can apply to commercial photography—Seidenberg urges photographers to consider different ways of thinking. It helps, he says, to consider possibilities beyond what's traditionally defined as a photographic specialty



and then nudge clients toward thinking about those possibilities as well.

Doing this often involves capturing not just a moment but an entire set of material conditions as viewed through a photographer's unique perspective. By letting these conditions seep into their artistic perspective, photographers can create more versatile work. In the

process, they can train their audience to want something unique instead of asking for something they've already seen in the marketplace.

"My suggestion is to actually identify a kind of photography that you find exciting in some way and see if you can nudge your clients towards those kinds of possibilities," says Seidenberg.

DIFFERENT AND SALABLE

Photographers who get caught up chasing trends soon find there's little to distinguish them in the marketplace because their work looks similar to that of many other photographers. When there's no artistic differentiation, the fallback for competition often comes down to price. The question becomes how to create photography





that is creative and distinctive but still commercially viable and not so far afield that customers don't know what to do with it.

While acknowledging this challenge, Seidenberg offers the counterpoint that perhaps professional photography needs more work that stands solidly in left field. "There might be more room for someone making work for a much smaller subset of people who are willing to pay for something that seems quite peculiar compared to the rest of the relatively uniform photography that people see," he says. This could be particularly true in the global marketplace, where discerning customers are not bound by geography and can connect with photographic work that speaks to them.

"Always consider: How are your photographs voiced in a way that distinguishes them from everyone else's work, particularly now, at a moment where there's such an extremely ordinary onslaught of images from all around us?" asks Seidenberg.

Photographers often focus on the hows of image making: lens, focal length, exposure, etc. While these considerations are valid, they are the least engaging items about an image, notes Seidenberg. "Trying to understand what a photographer is evoking rather than how they're evoking it should be the first consideration," he says. "That often gets lost in people's photography practice. They're not really thinking about evoking anything; they're not trying to make people think something. It all needs to have openness for the viewer to bring what they bring to the work."

Now is the time for photographers to think as artists, not just as technicians, he says.

RECIPROCATING AN EXPERIENCE

The novelist Saul Bellow once said, "A writer is a reader moved to emulation." Seidenberg adapts that quote to visual artists, saying, "An artist is a viewer moved to emulation—or maybe more accurately, an artist is a viewer moved to reciprocity." You are moved by some work. You think that's something you might be able to do for people. Maybe you'll seek ways to create that experience for others in ways you haven't seen before. "But you have to have that experience yourself to understand what you're looking for in your own

work,” says Seidenberg. “So looking at other photographs by photographers whose work you think is great and who are doing something strange and interesting, maybe even something you find uncomfortable or perplexing, can be really helpful.”

Further broaden your artistic perspective by engaging with work outside your specialty and communicate with artists who are working in different media. “What happens for people in any art form is they often only talk to other people who are using the media that they’re using, and I think that’s a mistake,” says Seidenberg. “Seeing other kinds of art, talking with and explaining yourself to other kinds of artists, is extremely useful. You want perspectives that aren’t just photography perspectives. Otherwise, you can get pushed into this corner where you aren’t able to see all of the possibilities you have as a visual thinker.”

TRUE TO YOUR VISION

It can be easy for photographers to start chasing what they think their audiences want. In the process, they will move further away from both their own passions and from whatever it is that makes their work distinct. Ironically, those passions and those distinctions are what ultimately attract an audience.

The questions photographers must ask themselves are, “*How is this work voiced as mine? What makes anyone think that this is distinguishable from other photographers doing work that may be similar in some way?*” says Seidenberg.

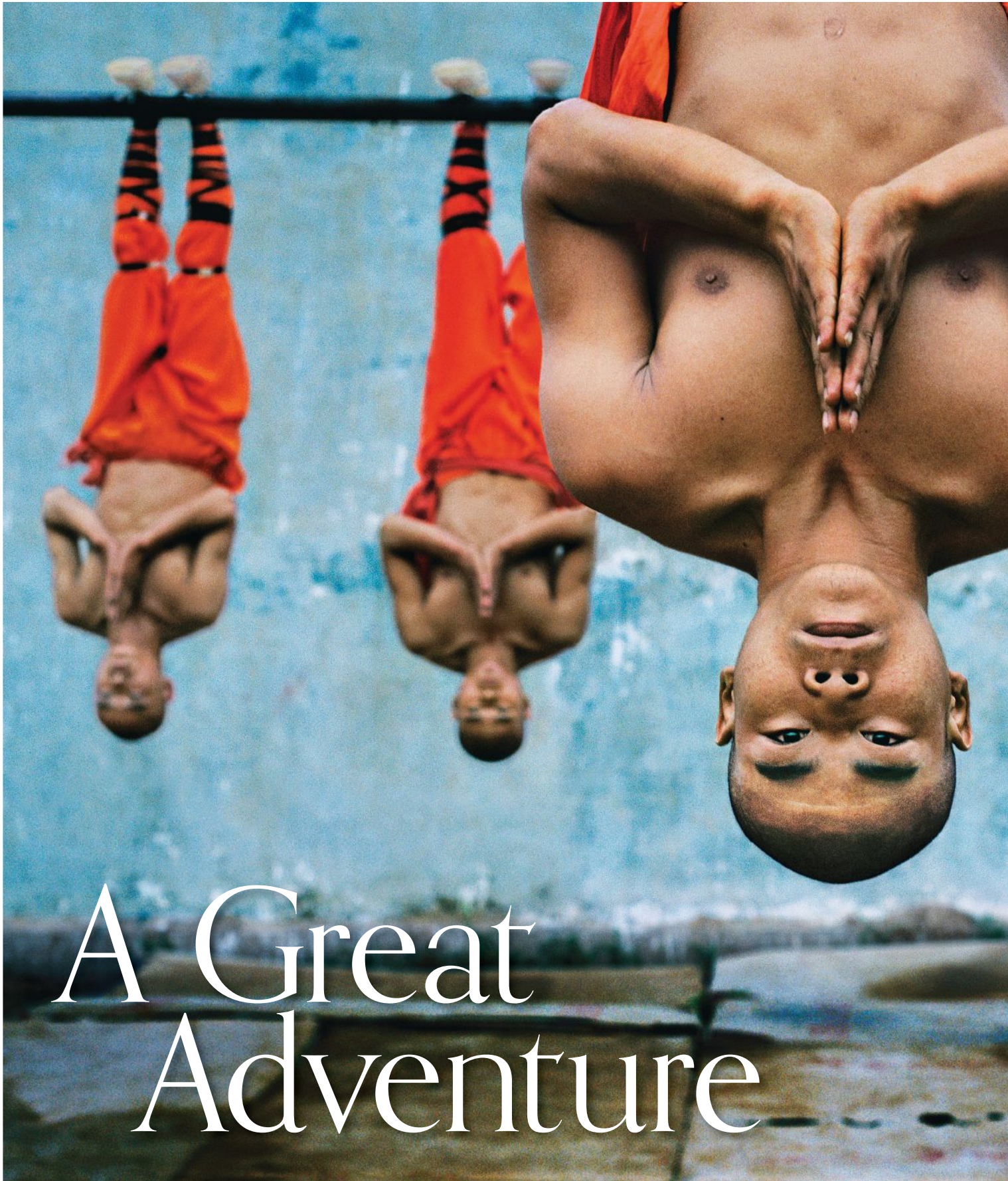
There are rarely easy answers because technique and visual expression come into play. And those things are in a state of flux. “But that’s the set of questions one has to always ask of one’s own work,” says Seidenberg.

Through asking these questions, photographers can find an easier path forward, particularly if they are feeling stuck creatively.

“I come back over and over again to this notion of having a distinct voice,” says Seidenberg. “Having something to say, having your own perspective, that you’re able to give through your work as a photographer that others aren’t doing in the same way, is so important.” •



STEVEN SEIDENBERG



A Great Adventure



STEVE MCCURRY REMAINS DEVOTED

BY MARK EDWARD HARRIS

The images that fill the 208 pages of Steve McCurry's latest book, "Devotion," explore the concept of human spirituality far beyond the boundaries of organized religions. In the book, writer Pico Iyer illustrates in words his interpretation of the concept: "Across every culture, we devote ourselves to our children, our faith, our families, and our greater purpose. We call it love, prayer, or service; in truth it's just surrender to what can never be fully known."

While McCurry is best known for his 1985 *National Geographic* "Afghan Girl" cover portrait of Sharbat Gula, "Devotion" reconfirms his place in the pantheon of photography for his complete body of work.

EARLY MUSE

Born in Philadelphia in 1950, McCurry has worked extensively for *National Geographic* and has been a member of Magnum Photos since 1986. In addition to receiving countless awards, he's published more than 20 books, which have often served as catalysts for exhibitions and gallery shows, including his most recent at the Peter Fetterman Gallery in Santa Monica.

McCurry studied film and fine art photography at The Pennsylvania State University before working several years as a freelancer. He then embarked on a life- and career-changing journey to India, where he fell in love with his muse, the country itself. "I'm fascinated with the extremes of culture and everything else you find in India," he says. "You have extreme wealth and extreme poverty. You have so many cultures and regions that are different: Kashmir, Ladakh, South India, then you have Bengal and the Himalayas. They're so different from anything I knew growing up. It's an ongoing education. India is the birthplace of many religions. I'm continually learning about Sikhism, Buddhism, Hinduism, the Parsis, and there's a large Muslim population.

"Calcutta and Mumbai are amazing with their chaos and endless surprises," he adds. "You're delighted and you're horrified. It's some humorous thing, then some tragedy. And great people, too. You can always strike up a great conversation on a train or wherever you happen to be with somebody and get really philosophical."

After several months of travel in India in the late 1970s, McCurry was smuggled into Afghanistan by refugees at the beginning of the Russian invasion. He spent weeks embedded with the Mujahideen, emerging with rolls of film that would show the true face of the conflict. He received the 1980 Robert Capa Gold Medal award, named after one of his photographic heroes, for his *Time* magazine coverage of the war.

DEVOTION

McCurry explains how the concept for "Devotion" evolved: "I've been fascinated with people who have a larger purpose in their life. Somebody who's dedicated to a loved one or a cause. Maybe it's a reli-







ANATOMY OF AN IMAGE

DATE: 1994

LOCATION: Kyaikto, Myanmar

SUBJECT: Monks make pilgrimage to Kyaiktiyo Pagoda (Golden Rock)

PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTES: "I love photographing in Myanmar, and one of my most known images from there is of monks on a pilgrimage to Kyaiktiyo Pagoda. I wanted to get the balance of the daylight with the rock illuminated by the large spotlights the government put up. I waited until just after the sun set so that I'd still have light in the sky but also have light on the rock. If I had shot later, the sky would have been black."

gious path or spiritual path and as a result it manifests itself in helping other people.” People who express compassion in those ways, he says, give life purpose and meaning beyond themselves. As an example, he cites doctors and nurses who leave their comfortable lives to work for Doctors Without Borders.

“When I think of the greater purpose I also think of social workers,” he says. “They could perhaps make a lot of money and have a comfortable life but instead they’ve gone in the direction of service or education, or maybe going into a war zone and trying to help people in need. Or it could be supporting animal rights or somebody who’s rescuing animals. This is what gives them purpose and fulfillment in their life.”

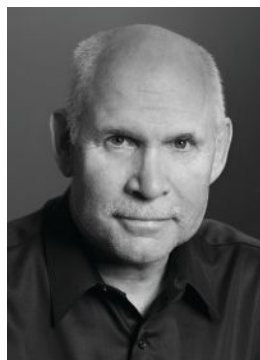
McCurry offers a heart-wrenching example from his own life: “My father’s devotion to my mother. He was willing to do whatever needed to be done to smooth the way for her. She had multiple sclerosis. It was slowly degenerative, so as time went on she needed more and more care. It was a Herculean task, and he did it with great love and compassion, not out of a sense of duty. So it’s not difficult for me to relate to the devotion a mother or a father gives to their children, often at the sake of their own life’s aspirations or career.”

ON THE STREET

McCurry sees a difference in American street life since the days of his youth, which figures into his current work. “Kids don’t play on the street,” he notes. “When I was a kid, we used to play football and baseball in the street in front of the house or we’d go to a park.” He contrasts this to Cuba, where children still routinely play outdoors and people sit outside talking to their neighbors.

While there continue to be successful street photographers, America is far removed from the days when





STEVE McCURRY

IN HIS BAG

"I still use a Domke bag. I'll usually leave the bag and my backup camera body in the hotel, and I'll go out with my Leica SL2, usually with the Leica 24-90mm f/2.8-4, some cards, and a couple of batteries. Sometimes I use the bag to put the camera in just to keep it hidden."

McCurry occasionally uses small continuous LEDs. "I find them particularly useful indoors when it's dark to accent a person or to illuminate an object." He estimates that it's been two decades since he last carried a flash.

He also heads out on the road with a Leica Super-Vario-Elmar-SL 16-35 f/3.5-4.5 ASPH lens. "I don't generally shoot that wide, but if I'm working in a small, tight area, then I might need an extra wide angle." For a recent assignment in Antarctica, he added a Leica Vario-Elmar-SL 100-400 f/5-6.3 for wildlife.

Helen Levitt and William Klein prowled the avenues of New York. In a mid-1990s interview, Klein said he couldn't do what he used to do, camera-in-hand on the streets, because people would be too suspicious of his motives.

McCurry describes how this has affected his approach in certain parts of the world. "I think we self-censure ourselves in the U.S. and Europe. You go into a park in New York or London or Paris and you don't even want to try because it's a different time now, where somebody with a kid will question what you are going to do with the picture. It's a different time with the Internet. I can understand that to a point. It takes the fun out of it. Even if you're respectful and just looking for something playful or some particular moment, when you're photographing in that kind of situation, you need time. You can't just walk up and go, *click!* It takes time to watch things unfold and watch a situation develop. You simply can't do that here. Whereas, if you were in another place such as in South Asia you can literally wander into a school—I'm a tourist or whatever and I want to photograph your school—and they would be completely honored to have you there."

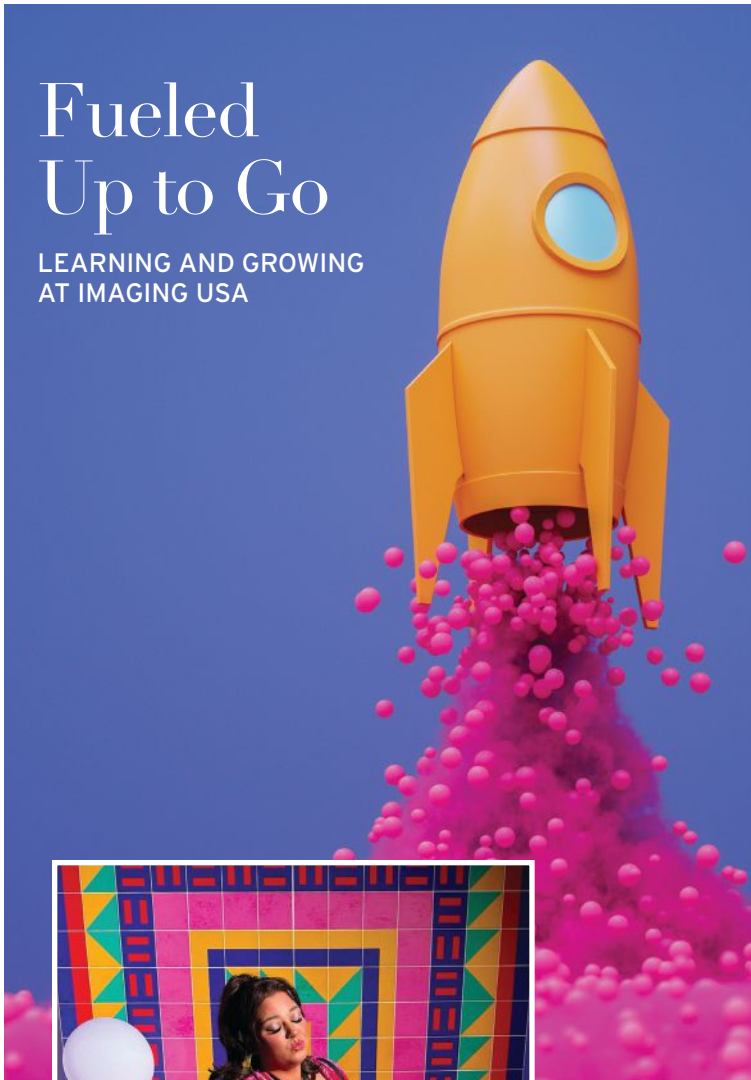
It's the difference, McCurry says, between feeling at home and feeling like an intruder. "In a place like India, for instance, as a photographer, you get up in the morning, you go out and people are doing all sorts of different activities. So you're looking. And things are happening and there's action. People are working. They're playing. They're washing, sleeping, eating. They're talking. So you're out there exploring with a camera and having this great adventure." •

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



Fueled Up to Go

LEARNING AND GROWING
AT IMAGING USA



©TJ LAVOIE

Marisa Balletti-Lavoie strikes a pose on a colorful Fujifilm set at Imaging USA 2024.

Photographers far and wide traveled to Louisville, Kentucky in January to fuel up on inspiration and make memories at PPA's Imaging USA conference. We asked a few attendees what they enjoyed most about the event.

Imaging USA 2024 wasn't Tim Donar's first rodeo. Nearly every year he's been a PPA member, Donar, M.Photog., CPP, has made the trek from Arizona to the conference. The educational sessions give his business a boost and feed his growing interest in photography niches outside of his bread and butter, he says. Donar specializes in drone and commercial architecture photography while nurturing his growing love of wildlife photography and fine art printmaking. Kevin Dooley's pre-conference class was among Donar's favorites this year. Dooley, M.Photog.Cr., shared the stories behind his favorite wildlife and tribal images, and captivated the class with his rich storytelling.

Christine Grosshans, M.Photog., CPP, says her Imaging USA aha moment happened in Cris Duncan's class when he shared how he uses black paint on umbrella modifiers to shape the light as he desires. "It was truly a game-changer," she says. She loves Imaging USA because it's so easy to meet new people in classes and the in-between moments as attendees wander around planning their next moves. Each year, she finds herself inspired by other photographers and often feels encouraged to share her own wisdom with the new photographers she meets.

Marisa Balletti-Lavoie, M.Photog.M.Artist.Cr., strutted the stage Monday night wearing a sparkly crown to accept her master of photography degree. Year after year, Balletti-Lavoie approaches the conference as an opportunity to connect in person with the photographers she's met through online networking. "It's my networking playground," she says. Putting faces to names, listening to their stories, and taking portraits of friends with her Olympus mirrorless camera and a 50mm lens are some of her favorite activities at the conference. "When I'm amongst my peers," she says, "my time is best spent."

Michelle VanTine, senior staff writer for *Fstoppers*, says that this year's conference was "full of incredible learning, insights, and a very holistic injection of enthusiasm." VanTine marveled over the teachable moments in a session by Lindsay Adler, M.Photog.Cr., as a model was photographed with nothing more than a light and a spatula. "The conference felt like an affirmation that I was doing everything right," says VanTine, who's been a full-time photographer for 16 years. "The strides I've made in my career will keep snowballing as I continue to grow, learn, and implement my knowledge." •

AWARD WINNERS SHINE

HONORING THEIR IMPACT
ON THE INDUSTRY

At Imaging USA 2024 in Louisville, Kentucky, PPA honored an elite group of photographers who made outstanding contributions to the field in 2023. In the December issue of *Professional Photographer*, we failed to include the complete list of the 2023 award recipients and apologize for our error.

©ALEX THE PHOTO GUY



Jamie Hayes accepts PPA's Volunteer of the Year award from then-PPA President Kira Derryberry.

BUSINESS EDUCATION AWARD

Jeffrey Shaw, Cr.Photog.

DIRECTOR'S AWARD

Colby McLemore, M.Photog.Cr., CPP

EDUCATION AWARD

Cris Duncan, M.Photog.M.Artist.Cr., CPP

HONORARY PHOTOGRAPHIC CRAFTSMAN

Scott Kurkian, Hon.Cr.Photog.

HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Trey Homan, Cr.Photog., CPP

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE AWARD

Guisepe Scozzi

JURORS MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD

Tina Timmons, M.Photog.Cr.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mark Seliger

TECHNOLOGY IMPACT AWARD

Nick Woodman

VANGUARD AWARD

Mark Weber, M.Photog.MEI.Cr., CPP

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Jamie Hayes, M.Photog.M.Wed.Photog.Cr., CPP, ABI, API •



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PPA has been my trusted companion in this creative journey. It's been helpful to have a mentor guide me through this ever-changing field. PPA also has my back thanks to their photography equipment insurance.

My goal in five years is to be a Certified Professional Photographer (CPP) and an established portrait photographer. My proudest moments are when clients reach out and tell me how much they loved their photos. It's a powerful reminder of why I chose this field and why I absolutely love what I do!

SHARE YOUR STORY!
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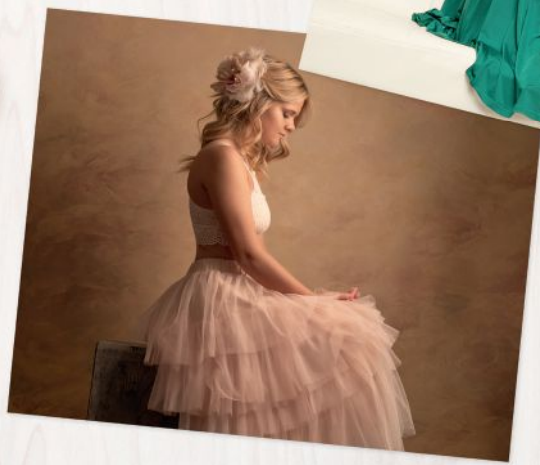
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Images courtesy of Jennifer DiDio Photography



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- ◆ Give back to your photographic community
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