

# DIGIT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP  
Number 73 2017 Issue 2





# Upcoming DIG events



Details of all DIG events are available on the Group's website at [www.rps.org/special-interest-groups/digital-imaging/events](http://www.rps.org/special-interest-groups/digital-imaging/events)



EASTERN CENTRE

**Alison Baskerville**

**JOINT EVENT  
WITH EAST  
ANGLIA REGION**

Sunday 11 June 2017 ~ Foxton, Cambridgeshire



Windswept Tree by Peter Paterson FRPS

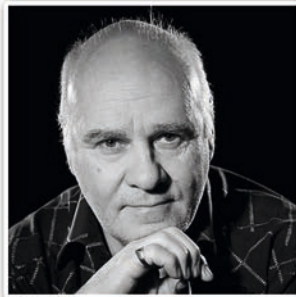


SCOTLAND CENTRE

**Peter Paterson FRPS**

**Photoshop CC  
Workflow and  
Printing**

Sunday 11 June 2017 ~ Bridge of Allan, Stirlingshire

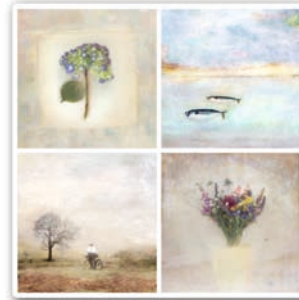


THAMES VALLEY CENTRE

**Terry Hewlett ARPS**

**MASTER FLASH  
AND FILM NOIR  
LIGHTING  
Practical Session**

Sunday 10 September 2017 ~ Wokingham, Berkshire



SOUTH EAST CENTRE

**Steven Le Provost  
FRPS AFIAP MPAGB FIFP**

**CREATIVE  
PHOTOGRAPHY**

Sunday 1st October 2017, Weald of Kent Grammar School, Tonbridge, TN9 2JP



THAMES VALLEY CENTRE

**Walter Benzie HonFRPS  
PRESENTATION (tba)  
& MILLENNIUM CUP  
COMPETITION  
FOR PRINTS**

Sunday 15 October 2017 ~ Wokingham, Berkshire



EASTERN CENTRE

**Michael  
Eleftheriades**

**DEMYSTIFYING  
LIGHTROOM**

Sunday 5 November 2017 ~ Foxton, Cambridgeshire



THAMES VALLEY CENTRE

**Paul Mitchell FRPS  
WOODLAND WAYS  
and  
SPIRIT OF LIGHT**

Sunday 12 November 2017 ~ Wokingham, Berkshire

## DI Expo 2017

The DI Expo 2017 - a day of presentations, demonstrations and fun will be held at the Holiday Inn Birmingham Airport on Sunday the 23rd September 2017

For more details see page 42

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Nick Turpin

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## Editorial

### Gary Beaton



There is no question that the upcoming DI Expo is a high point in the DIG calendar. This issue of DIGIT gives a taste of what some of our speakers and presenters at the Expo do with their photography, in addition to some more regular features that you have come to expect.

Overall, in these pages we have a range of topics which cover many photographic interests which, I am sure, will inform and inspire every one of us. From 'Street Photography' to still life and architecture, our contributors make it appear deceptively easy to achieve superb results. But at the same time they are pleased to share with us a bit of history of their area of interest or tips to help each of us to emulate their results.

Whatever our own individual interests or specialisations, the idea of publishing a book of our work can now be a practical reality, using easily available online tools. Rod Fry offers advice to help us make best use of these facilities.

Although it is inevitable that DIG members have differing and wide-ranging interests, we all have one thing in common - an interest in digital imaging techniques. However, it is perhaps easy to forget that this does not mean everyone is a Photoshop wizard! Brian Collins explains how Photoshop and many other image editing programs can be used to improve our images without making permanent changes. This undoubtedly makes it easier to experiment with the power that such software puts in our hands, and may open up new avenues to develop our personal photographic style.

I wish you enjoyable and inspiring reading.

## From the chair

### Janet Haines ARPS



Welcome to the summer issue of DIGIT. We consider this a really major edition as it is showcasing our DI Expo to be held in September, near the NEC at Birmingham.

For this year's DI Expo we have booked some really top class presenters for you. Glyn Dewis is an Adobe Photoshop guru who jets around the world giving lectures at some of the biggest shows and events internationally. Nick Turpin is an inspirational evangelist on street photography and has quite an exceptional talent; how lucky are we to get him along to our DI Expo.

Then we have a series of presenters and studio hosts covering filters, architecture, high-speed video; with live studios for portraiture and still life flower photography. The programme has been devised to cover all the genre we know our members tell us they enjoy doing the most.

The RPS Distinction team are offering the opportunity for personal 1-to-1 advisory sessions with two of the best RPS Assessors. So whether you are working towards your LRPS or ARPS (excluding Nature), this is something not to be missed.

Finally there will be a hall full of some of our favourite retailers where we can discuss their products and even treat ourselves to some new goodies to take home. You will find their ads within this magazine and on the day most will have special offers for us.

So if you haven't already done so then do please go to the web site and book your event tickets now at [rps.org/DIGExpo](http://rps.org/DIGExpo). The programme is flexible; no need for pre-booking the various sessions. You will be able to pick up tickets for studio sessions from reception on the day.

Hope to see you there.





# Just bricks and mortar



**DAVID CLAPP is an award-winning landscape and travel photographer. In between developing his portfolio, he regularly shares his skills through workshops in exotic places!**

When I first began my voyage into architectural photography back in February 2006, photographic genres seemed to be ring fenced. As a creative person, I am fascinated with everything. Flying out of London, climbing into the fresh morning air over the embers of the sparkling city night, was a truly magical feeling and it still is, some twelve years later. Back when I began exploring, creating and publishing images of these urban adventures, I was surprised at the underwhelming response from my landscape friends. Many photographers couldn't find the same fascination, but to me, a puzzle solver, the riddles of shape and form provided welcome creative relief. In essence, architectural photography is the celebration of humanity, our achievements, its affluence and its history. It can be shown in simplicity and complexity, through the spaces we occupy, in the spaces we work and spaces we play. Intimate,

complex, flamboyant, organic, mathematical, historical; design lives within us all. You can tell I am in love with the world...

So where was I going in 2006? To Valencia, to photograph the City of Arts and Science, a recently finished masterpiece by the architect Santiago Calatrava. The project was risky business indeed. Convincing the city of the benefits was difficult enough, but its forward thinking and futuristic design won over the hearts of the city. Every year, now thirty years after its initial conception, it continues to attract visitors from all over the world. Spend a morning photographing in its formidable presence and this 'future shock' will hand deliver a set of world-class images, should the conditions be favourable.

Architectural photography is all about immersion, throwing your arms wide and exploring the



concept, from the grand design to the fine details. Think wide, think long, think about capturing a sense of place and then think abstract. Familiarising yourself is the key here. Resist the temptation to shoot and let the walking begin and excitement will build. Narrow your aim, refine the target. Walk the lines and angles, follow the curves and loops.

Lighting is absolutely key. A successful portfolio will show a range of mood, portrayed under flattering lighting conditions to get the best from your photography. Sunrise, sunset, twilight, lowlight but also intermittent light, light from a cloudburst, are essential ingredients. Many photographers make the rookie error of believing that a composition with heavy polarisation tuned black and white is enough, especially for modern architecture, but the images are barely more

than mediocre. As with all subjects, lighting and considerate framing are holistic ingredients in lifting the subject skywards towards the extraordinary. Then there is the element of luck, the unexpected breakthrough – what I am saying is calculate the angles in advance, in the lower moments and then strike when the light is right, to remove the complexity.

Let's not forget historical architecture. Some of the most inspiring subjects perhaps begin with Neolithic standing stones (can we call it architecture?) and lead us to castles and chateaux. The Loire Valley has some of my favourite architecture on the planet, filled with sumptuous furniture and unimaginable yet complimentary colour schemes. The French and Italians clearly understood style and their architectural legacy is immense. One of my favourite shoots to date





was Chateau Chambord, where by complete luck I managed to bag an entire Chambord portfolio in a single day. A menacing sunset lead to soft pastel shades at dawn, mist softly rising from the surrounding waterway, leading to a golden dawn. Then soft feathery clouds became the perfect backdrop. The only thing missing was a coach and horses, or a cloaked rider... next time!

There is no right or wrong selection of tools for the job. I carry a range of lenses in my bag, all Canon – a 16-35mm f/4L IS, a 24mm f/4 TS-E II, a 24-70mm f/4L IS, a 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS, and finally a 1.4x III extender, which provides a whopping 560mm of compositional potential. For architectural work I also pack a 15mm fisheye.

The 1.4x extender can also be used on the 24mm TS-E to give a 35mm TS-E. This is very handy as it often produces a more relatable perspective, without the slight stretchy edges of the 24mm.

I always have two cameras, the new Canon 5D Mk IV and a Canon 6D, converted for infrared

(665nm). Infrared photography has become a speciality over the last five years, and I now seek out historical architectural subjects to shoot in infrared in particular.

The built environment is as important as the natural world. Their impact on each other is getting evermore tangled, but the designs, materials and inventive concepts are reaching new levels of integration. The modern architect, Zaha Hadid, who sadly died last year, was a great believer in organic design, heralding that there are 'no straight lines in nature, or my architecture'. The more intricate and mathematical the approach to design becomes, the more we will see subjects literally beyond our comprehension. Remember, we are only as good an architectural photographer as the subject and as the architect, so seek out the world's very best designs, both past and present, and push your photography skywards!



David Clapp's portfolio covers a diverse range of photographic subjects and techniques. Being a self-confessed fan of technology who endlessly pores over technical manuals (but has never finished a fiction book) he is equally at home using a computer to enhance his photography. He offers one-to-one tuition and workshops with small groups, both behind the camera and in front of the computer. See more of his work at [davidclapp.co.uk](http://davidclapp.co.uk).

David will be presenting some of his architectural work and talking about his techniques at the DI Expo.





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# Street photography



**NICK TURPIN** spends a lot of time watching and photographing what happens on the streets. He shares with us some of the history of street photography and what the future may hold.

The phrase 'Street Photography' is not well loved, even by those who practice it. A more accurate and descriptive name would probably be Candid Public Photography but that's a bit of a mouthful.

Street Photography is part of the documentary tradition in photography and the work of good Street Photographers, whilst often being entertaining and engaging, forms an important record of contemporary life for future generations. My own candid photographs from London's streets are held in the collection of the Museum of London.

The earliest occurrence of the phrase Street Photography that I have been able to find is in the British Journal of Photography from 1878, but it is generally considered that Street Photography

was born in Paris in the 1920s following the invention of the roll-film camera that could be used quickly and without a tripod. Being able to walk the streets of Paris with a small unobtrusive camera in the style of the French flâneur has become the ideal for Street Photographers ever since. Photographers such as Willy Ronis, Robert Doisneau and Henri Cartier-Bresson captured spontaneous moments and scenes across the French capital exploiting the notion, made famous by Cartier-Bresson, of the 'Decisive Moment'.

If Paris was the birthplace of Street Photography then it grew up and matured on the streets of New York City in the 60s and 70s. The same small rangefinder cameras used by the Parisians to explore what photography could do in terms



of composition and moments were used by a strongly Jewish community of New York Street Photographers to capture life on the streets of Manhattan. Photographers like Lee Friedlander, Joel Meyerowitz, Tod Papageorge and Garry Winogrand shot Broadway, 5th Avenue and Central Park with a raw and unforgiving eye. These were not like the beautiful and romantic photographs of Paris decades before; these were harsh records of modern American life. Garry Winogrand in particular hovered on the street waiting to insert his camera into the lives of individuals going about their daily routine and capture the gestures, expressions, relationships and awkwardness of being a human in a public place.

A turning point in the recognition of Street Photography was the New Documents exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in 1967 which featured the work of Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander and Gary Winogrand. The show was curated by John Szarkowski and identified a new direction in photography that emphasised the informal, and casual 'snapshot'.

It's difficult to leave America without mentioning

the Swiss photographer Robert Frank, whose road trip across the country in 1955 produced the highly influential book *The Americans*. More than any other publication in the history of photography, *The Americans* changed the way photography was done. Robert Frank was an outsider in the States and his pictures refused to tow the line of the American Dream in the way that documentary photography had so far done in the pages of magazines like *Life*. Financed by a Guggenheim Fellowship grant and without commercial expectations, Frank was free to record the nation exactly as he found it. This brutally honest and slightly subversive approach has been a common aspect of Street Photography ever since.

When the pendulum swung back to Europe it did not return to Paris, where laws restricting public photography in order to protect privacy had since been enacted, but landed in London where a whole new generation of young photographers were being inspired to make pictures in the street. London was an obvious place for a revival, and the growth of image sharing sites, social media and cheap digital







cameras drove an explosion of interest in Street Photography. A young group of photographers formed in January 2000 called the in-public Street Photography collective and used the still emerging internet to share their work and reach an audience that was still impossible through the traditional routes of book publishing and gallery shows. The early in-public group included myself, David Gibson, Matthew Stuart, Richard Bram and Nils Jorgensen but has now grown to include 21 Street Photographers around the world. These were early days for photography on the internet, it would be four more years before Flickr and Facebook would launch in 2004 and another six years before Instagram became part of everyday life. London had staked its claim, and in 2010 the first London Street Photography Festival took place. Thames and Hudson published their survey of the scene *Street Photography Now* and the next year the Museum of London held its most popular show 'London Street Photography 1860-2010'.

London is a liberal, multicultural city with a history that can be traced back to Roman times when a bridge was built across the Thames in 50 AD. Now covering 100 square miles, the city has dozens of different cultural and social enclaves all set side by side, from the wealthy boroughs of Kensington

and Knightsbridge in the West to the cool hipster areas of Shoreditch and Hoxton in the East. Street Photographers have found London to be a rich source of inspiration for traditional approaches to Street Photography but also a place to explore both the city and different ways of picturing it.

So what of the future of Street Photography? The popularisation of the Street Photographers' approach has led to a dilution of its definition. A great many images that appear are mislabelled as Street Photography when, in fact, they are posed or staged, or composited in some way. The definition that I, and in-public, use is that Street Photographs must be candidly shot in a public place if they are to be considered to be documents of modern life. As soon as the scene is bruised, or interaction takes place, they become something else. Another threat to the Street Photographer's practice is the loss of the public domain to private developers who impose rules prohibiting photography; hundreds of acres of London have been sold off by our councils to UK and foreign investment firms. We will never get this land back and it is lost as public space where the public can gather, cycle, busk, protest or take photographs. But the future of Street Photography is not gloomy, and photographers continue to find unique and individual ways of





photographing public life. The borders of Street Photography are being stretched and probed all the time, especially where Street Photography meets art or reportage. There are huge numbers of Street Photography books being published every year and the renowned agency Magnum Photos, last year, took on their first dedicated Street Photographer in the shape of Matthew Stuart.

In August of 2017 the street photography community will converge on London for STREET LONDON, a three-day Street Photography Symposium of presentations and discussions about the medium. If you are interested in exploring Street Photography, the symposium would be a good place to start, or you can sign up for one of the many Street Photography workshops that take place on a regular basis.

Nick Turpin is a London based Street Photographer and founder of the international Street Photographers group in-public. His study of London bus commuters, *On The Night Bus*, was published in November 2016. See more of his work at [nickturpin.com](http://nickturpin.com).

Nick will be presenting his thoughts and advice on Street Photography at the DI Expo.





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# Still-life comes to life



Fine art photographer POLINA PLOTNIKOVA ARPS shares her inspiration and technique.

There is no question about it – I feel passionate about creating my images! Be it travel, still-life, flowers or whatever, I will do just about anything that is necessary to capture and create that image. As a Russian-born, UK-based photographer who studied at Moscow State University and later at Christie's Modern Art Studies program in London, clearly my background influences my work.

For many years I worked in image libraries, dealing with great images produced by the most successful commercial and fine art photographers.

Eventually, however, I found that I wanted to create my own images. My early work featured 'pretty pictures' of flowers, captured in their natural form, but soon I realised that I was imagining an image and then working to build that picture photographically. Using this approach led to my project, 'Past Perfect', a series of images created over a two-year period focusing on withered flowers and seed heads and their often unexpected beauty, being awarded a Gold Medal at the Royal Horticultural Society's Shades of Autumn Show in London in 2014. This year, for



the first time, a Photographic Exhibition was part of the annual Chelsea Flower Show. I exhibited new images from my 'Past Perfect' project and I was delighted to be awarded a Gold Medal for my portfolio. I look forward to sharing some of my flower photography techniques during a hands-on workshop at the DI Expo.

Another speciality that I enjoy greatly, and which allows almost boundless creative potential, is the still-life. I do not feel constrained by the traditional notion of the genre, and often include a dynamic element within the image. Although I do prefer capturing my image 'in camera' as closely as possible, the tools available to the modern photographer enable me to create images that I can imagine but which would be difficult (or, perhaps, impossible) to make in one shot. Still-life, which almost by definition is created in the studio, is ideal for a perfectionist like me - no one fidgets, makes faces or gets bored, no sudden gust of wind or other unpredictable bit of weather can spoil your shot. You have as much time as you need to get things 'just right'. But, then again, it is all up to you; if the final result is not what I saw in my mind, it is nobody's fault but my own.



My favourite type of still-life photography is a painterly, fine art style. I have made series of images in a style of Old Masters and another in the style of Impressionists artists. When I do this I am not trying to create an image that pretends to be a painting, but instead I am applying my knowledge of art history as I visualise my final image.







Composition is key to the final image, as is detail. I spend a lot of time setting up a still-life. Sometimes, while setting the shot up, I realise that some elements need to be changed, moved, or even taken out of the picture altogether. I might draw a quick sketch before I start to guide me consistently to create the final image. There may be challenges as I set up my props - folds in the fabric that I am using may not fall the way I imagined them, or a piece of fruit which does not want to sit in the right place. All these things require time and attention to get them right, but to me this is the fun part. Working in a studio

The idea of an image often comes to my mind pretty much fully formed, so that the only thing left is to set it up in the studio. Sometimes an object, a texture, or a colour triggers an idea. It may take days, sometimes weeks, or even months planning the shot, visualising what I want, and seeking objects for a particular image until I have exactly the right one. Sometimes seeing fresh fruit in a supermarket might remind me of a plate and a knife I have at home, and I will start planning a still-life set up using these elements. Patience, of course, is a virtue. On one occasion, having a clear final image in my mind, I had to wait many months while I searched for the right vintage vegetable cutter that I wanted to combine with other

objects I already had. Only then could I create the picture as it had to be!

I shoot with Canon 5DS R, and my favourite lens is Canon EF 100mm F2.8 L IS USM Macro. But sometimes the precise optics of a lens do not suit the image I want to create. In those situations, I absolutely love working with various Lensbaby optics. Each design offers a range of opportunities to blend a chosen degree of sharpness and a fall-off of image definition around the focus point providing still more creative opportunities.

When it comes to post-processing, I usually know in advance what exactly I am going to do with every single shot. I love working with textured layers and often these provide a great way to enhance my original idea. Over the years I have collected a wide range of textures and patterns that I have shot myself, blending them in Photoshop to create something unique. And, although it may seem a simple point, cropping the final image, into square format, for example, is a fundamental element of the image that I want to create.

I am very fortunate also to be able to share my ideas and images with a group of fellow photographers in the Arena Photographers group. I find the advice and feedback that other members offer is invaluable as my ideas develop.



It's been a wonderful journey from my early days working in image libraries to being able to create images – whether the subject is a still-life or a flower – with my own personal style. And the only limit in the future is my imagination!

Polina Plotnikova ARPS is a fine art photographer specialising in still-life and flower imagery. See more of her work at [polinaplotnikova.com](http://polinaplotnikova.com), and on the Arena Photographers website at [arenaphotographers.com](http://arenaphotographers.com). Polina will be offering a hands-on studio workshop at the DI Expo. At the time of going to press some studio places are still available - reserve your place now.



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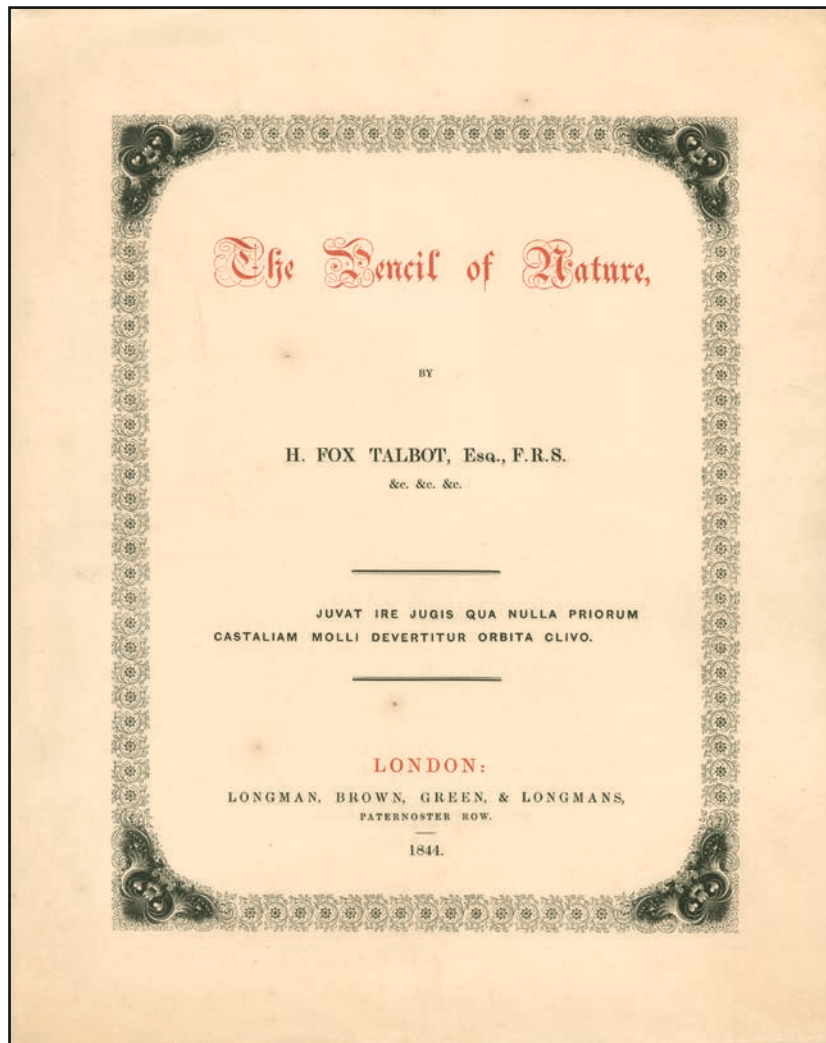
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# The renaissance of the photo book



Rod Fry ARPS is an avid historian and creator of photo books. Here he looks at how the photo book has evolved and how technology is making it easier than ever to make our own.

The photo book has been an integral part of photography ever since Henry Fox Talbot produced what is arguably the first one in 1844, 'The Pencil in Nature', a copy of which is in the RPS collection.

A few years ago, for most amateur photographers, the cost of publishing a book

was prohibitive. That was until the rise of online, on-demand book production, which started about ten years ago. In 2008 I read an article by Carol Hudson FRPS who carried out a review of available online book services. She recommended Blurb books, so I decided to take plunge and I have not looked back since.



## Why make a book?

Traditionally, we have made prints of our selected images for entry into competitions or exhibitions. Afterwards they take up room, and there are only so many that can fit under the bed or on top of the wardrobe! If you put on your own exhibition there are many other considerations to take into account, the cost of framing and mounting your photographs, the hire of a gallery, and the ideal design and layout of your work may have to be compromised because of the gallery space. Also you may have to work with a curator who has his/her own ideas that may not be in keeping with yours. And after all your hard effort and expense the exhibition closes and is soon to be forgotten.

The digital projected image is even more ethereal, and only useful to show an audience your work on the night. You can, of course, post work online to various social media platforms. The trouble here is that so many millions of photographs are uploaded on a daily basis that the casual viewer is looking at a tsunami of photographs and can't possibly take any of them in. This, in my opinion, devalues the worth of a photograph.

Suddenly the idea of making a book becomes an attractive proposition; it is the complete antidote to the digital age. Books are a 'slow burn' for your work, they are around for a long time, books can be shared, and can change hands from one owner to another. They are still relatively cheap to make, and you have complete control over what you decide to put in your book and who to show it to.

The outlets where you can show your photo books is growing year by year, with an ever expanding number of photo book events, book fairs and photo book exhibitions. Photo book collecting and making opens you and your work up to a different photographic community, with a younger demographic, which leads to new ideas and possibilities.

## The RPS International Photobook Exhibition 2106

In 2016 the RPS Contemporary Group organised the International Photobook Exhibition on behalf of the Society. The exhibition was open to all who wanted to enter, and is thought to be the first such exhibition held in the UK. Competitions and exhibitions for photo books are well established in Europe, but not so in the UK. The exhibition

received 155 entries from 23 countries. The selectors chose a shortlist of 25 books to be exhibited at the Espacio Gallery London in October last year, from which the eventual medal winners were selected. The whole event was a great success and put the Society firmly on the map as far as being in the forefront of photo book events in the UK.



The the opening night of the exhibition at the Espacio Gallery, London

## But what is a photo book?

Perhaps the most useful definition comes from Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, in their book *The Photobook, A History*. Here they define a photo book as 'a book - with or without text - where the work's primary message is carried by photographs'.

## How to make a photo book

The choice of subject matter is entirely up to you, but I usually find I have to be passionate about the subject. I like to do a lot of background research before I start making my photographs. You need to support your theme with photographs of suitable strength to carry your message and move the story line along. This may mean sacrificing your strongest image if it overpowers the rest of your book. You will need to develop the art of sequencing your work, and using a book design that supports the photographs. This is called the topography of the book.

You should pay close attention to the overall feel and characteristics of your book. A book is a tactile object and made to be handled. How does it feel in your hands? Is it a page-turner? These skills take time to learn, but if you collect books on photography look at them and ask yourself which ones you prefer and why?

Once I have selected and fully researched my



# THE RENAISSANCE OF THE PHOTO BOOK

topic, I then start making the photographs and put them into a folder. For one project I had amassed over 600 images - but I decided that I just wanted forty pictures to tell the story. You really need to be critical in your editing and the sequencing your work. Those of who have experience of audio-visual work or like panelling your prints will have a distinct advantage.

I then write the text for my book, and this can take more time than shooting the images. I spell check, read and re-read my text many times. Then my wife will proof read my work and make the final corrections that I have missed. A fresh pair of eyes is vital in picking up things you may have overlooked.

## Book design

Book design is a specialist field that requires many years to learn. You may feel the need to approach an expert if your book warrants it, but don't be put off by the software available online which can offer you some good tips and advice to set you on the right path. Book making is subjective there are no right and wrong answers, but rather what works and what does not work.

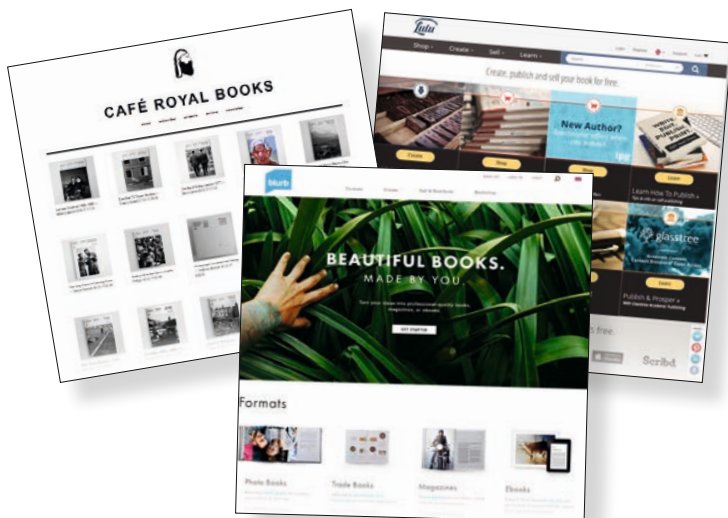
In book design there are many things to consider before you are ready to make your book. What shape do you want your book to be, landscape, portrait or square? What shape suits your images best? Do you want it to be a hard back or soft

back book? Do you want a small intimate book, or something larger? How many pages do you want? On this point, many people at first try to cram in too many images and do not give the photographs breathing space. Remember white space is equally important as pages filled with photographs or text.

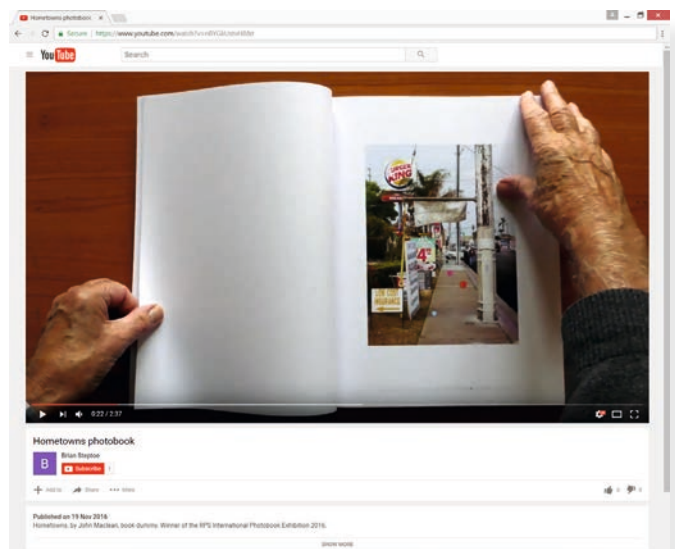


Do you want a border around your photographs, or do you prefer a full bleed image covering the whole page? Do you want your images to spread across both pages? Remember, some detail can be lost in the join or gutter. In general, the images on the right hand page tend to be more dominant. Do the images flow from one to another? Do you want more than one image on a page?

Some people prefer to print out a contact sheet and layout the images so they can re arrange them as many times as they like until the final images and sequence emerges. Others prefer to



*There is a wide variety of on-line resources to help make and publish your photo books. Many web sites offer guidance on layout and tools to let you see how each page will look when it is printed. Some have on-line stores, or links to other sites, which will allow you to sell you books if you choose to.*



*And to see how your photo book could look when you have completed your design, take a look at the winner of the RPS International Photobook Exhibition 2106 on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/nBYGkUstvH8>.*



do this in the computer. Whatever method you decide. Leave the work for a while and come back to it as many times as you like until you are totally happy with the final result. Then, and only then, are you ready to upload your book and wait for the postman to deliver it in a few days.

## Photo book communities

As well as making books I am a keen collector of photo books. I have exchanged books with friends in this country and as far afield as Japan. Photo books are a platform to show your work in a way you want it to be seen, they are still relatively cheap to make and buy. You can work individually or in collaboration with other photographers to make joint books.

There is a large number of community and independent micro publishers springing up to make photo books. The books they make are usually limited editions with a small print run of 200 to 500 copies. Café Royal Books and the Hoxton Press are two excellent examples.

If you are wondering what direction you would like to take your photography why not give book making a try.



*The first book I collected and still perhaps my favourite is called 'England and the English' by Dmitri Kastrine. He is a white Russian émigré who lived and worked in Britain in the 1970s. He later moved to New York, and I am still in contact with him.*

*Another favourite is by an American photographer named William Eggleston, called 'Guide', showing his work from America in the Deep South.*



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# Compare and contrast



**PAUL SANDERS** uses filters to control the contrast in his images. He explains the difference that a graduate or neutral density filter can make to landscape images.

I'm often asked what piece of equipment I can't live without - many expect it to be my Fujifilm cameras, or a prime lens; no it's my Lee Filter system. Without any hesitation I can say that I would be lost without it.

Filters are possibly one of the most overlooked and underrated pieces of equipment that people buy. Most under invest, some think that it's better to rely on Photoshop filters or gradients. But let me say this; getting it right in camera at the point of capture is photography.

You wouldn't take an out of focus image and hope to correct it in post production, so why would you dream of not bothering to get the balance of exposure correct?

I always prefer to get the image I want correct in camera rather than spend time over the computer afterwards, it leaves more time to take pictures!

As I said at the start, filters are to me the most important piece of kit I use. Careful use of filters enables me to bring my vision to life, whether it's controlling the balance between sky and land by using graduated filters, to slowing the exposure time by using neutral density filters, I can't live without them.

Controlling contrast - and thereby maximising the dynamic range of your camera's sensor - is one of the most important skills any photographer can master. The simple addition





of a graduated neutral density filter brings the extreme, or sometimes subtle, contrast that all photographers encounter under control. You can bring in a delicate mood, enhance the sky or create the feeling of infinity that matches your emotional reaction to the subject.

My advice on filters is always to buy a filter system. Although screw-in types are excellent for some applications, graduated filters need to slide up and down to suit your composition. You also need to be able to rotate the filter as horizons or the direction of light are rarely always

straight or fall exactly half way across your view.

The biggest complaint I get is that a filter system is expensive; but so is a good lens! If you invest £2000 in a camera body and £1200 in a lens, why would you then spend £20-£30 on a filter to go in front of it, which will instantly destroy the image quality? It just doesn't make sense.

If you demand the best from your images, if image quality really matters, then you have to invest in getting the best performance you can out of the filters you buy. In real terms, investing in a filter system is actually better financial sense



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because you only need an adapter ring to fit the filter holder to each of your lenses and one filter will be usable with all of your lenses. If you are buying good filters that are optically correct, this will work out cheaper than buying a screw-in one for every lens you have.

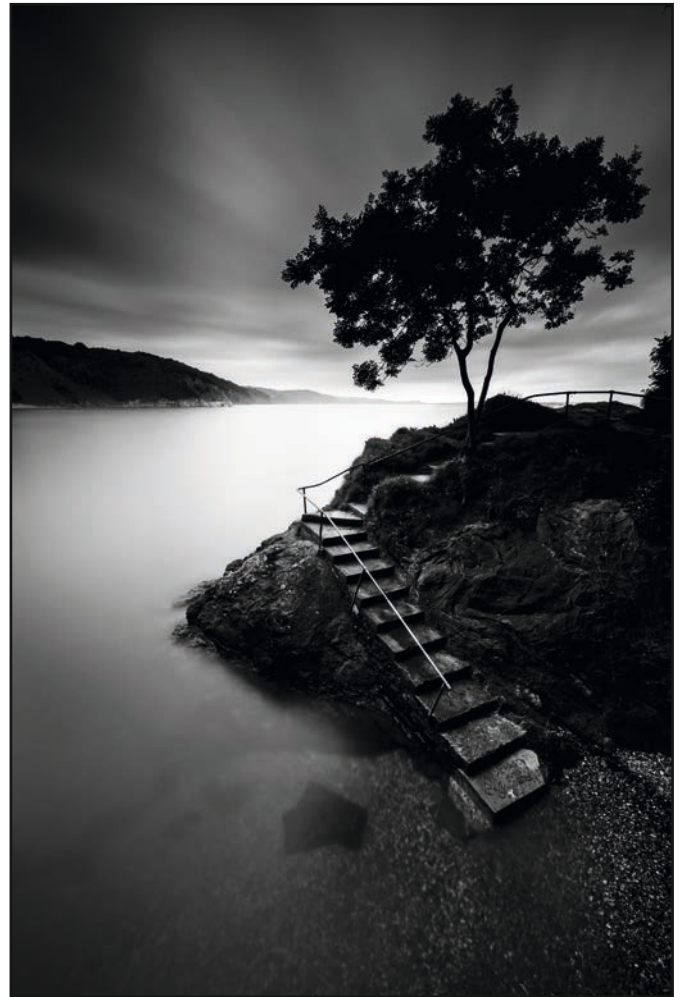
The filters I use are hand made in the UK by Lee. They are colour-neutral which is really important, and something in which the cheaper brands fall woefully short. They are also rigorously tested with a densitometer which means when it says 0.6 you know it's going to be exactly 2 stops - not two and a bit. That's important because it gives you confidence, and confidence in our work is something we could all use.

The same can be said of the full neutral density filters - you know the big stoppers etc. You have to know what you're getting to be able to work out the correct exposure, that's why I steer well clear of variable neutral density filters, you just can't accurately calculate the exposure. Not knowing what your filters deliver will result in

frustration and disappointment.

Often the range of filters is quite daunting too, many people struggle to know where to start buying. The filters themselves are also available in three different sizes - 150mm, 100mm and 75mm. The larger 150mm are designed for lenses that have bigger front elements, super-wide angles, for example. The 100mm are more general purpose and the 75mm are suitable for compact system mirror-less cameras. I would recommend that you actually go into a shop and try the filters on your lens, there's nothing worse than making the mistake I did by investing in the smaller size and then realising that when using it with my widest lens I had some vignetting!

Graduated ND filters come in soft, medium, hard and very hard graduations - they also come in 0.3, 0.45, 0.6, 0.75, 0.9, 1.0 and 1.2 densities. Pretty baffling if you are a newcomer, and expensive if you buy the lot! As a starting point I would recommend that you buy yourself a 0.6 medium neutral density graduated filter, this will



allow you to control the contrast between the land and sky in most circumstances. You'll also need the filter holder - which comes with slots for two filters, however it is very easy to add a third slot as long as your lenses aren't too wide. This is attached to the lens by an adapter ring, they come in standard and wide angle - I always buy the wide angle ones and just use them on all my lenses regardless.

If you are thinking of starting in Long exposure then you'll need to add a Big Stopper (10 stops) and a pro glass 0.9 (stops) to give you

the flexibility needed in a variety of lighting conditions.

Once you are comfortable and confident using the initial filters you will also know which filter to purchase next.

In short, using filters to get more control over your photography will help improve your photography and enable you to create the kind of images you see in all the magazines and books that you have probably invested in over the years.

Enjoy being more balanced!

Paul Sanders is passionate about landscape photography and loves being outside surrounded by the beauty of the world. He has been a professional photographer for over 30 years, starting in fashion and advertising photography, moving on to press and photojournalism, including the position of Picture Editor for The Times newspaper. More recently he has chosen to focus on landscape photography where he believes that he can convey emotion in every photograph he takes. His long exposures are his favourites, where leaving the shutter open for anything between 5 and 45 minutes allows the light and elements to move gives an ethereal quality that has a painterly feel to the resulting photographs. See more of Paul's work at [paulsanders.biz/](http://paulsanders.biz/).

At the DI Expo, Paul will be talking us through how he has used filters and long exposures to capture his beautiful images.



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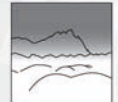
Sony A7r, 35mm ZA lens. 0.8 sec @ f/14, iso 100

## Stokksnes

Iceland's intense terrain of volcanic rock, savage mountains and glaciers make this terrain a visual challenge for the landscape photographer.

In many circumstances, neutral density graduates can ride to the rescue; this photograph from Stokksnes illustrates an unorthodox application, with the 0.6 ND graduated filter (two stops) positioned lower than you might think. The filter's full density covers the jagged profile of the mountain, with the graduation zone beginning at the foot of the snow and extending over the dunes in the distance.

Even with a hard graduate, careful positioning of the filter (especially with high quality truly neutral filters) can produce a seamless, 'invisible' effect.



LEE 0.6 ND  
hard grad filter



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# Non-destructive techniques in Photoshop



**BRIAN COLLINS ARPS** explains how to make edits in Photoshop without permanently altering your images.

Lightroom is a great photo editor, and should be the starting point of any non-destructive workflow. But editing some images requires the additional capabilities of Photoshop, which may be less familiar to many. This article is about how best to use Photoshop in a non-destructive way.

## What are non-destructive edits?

These are Photoshop edits which, as far as is reasonably practical:

- do not directly change the content of any pixels,
- can be revised later without losing existing edits or affecting the quality of the image, and
- do not involve copying 'snapshots' of current content appearance onto new layers which can be modified.

The sort of edits that can be repeatedly modified

(with no impact on image quality) include:

- changing values of sliders or drop-down options – and the changes can be a little or a lot,
- editing, normally painting, layer masks,
- copying or cloning content onto new layers,
- application of adjustment layers, and
- filters and transforms on a Smart Object layer.

There are a few general recommendations, which should normally apply to all Photoshop edits, but are especially significant when attempting to edit non-destructively.

Perhaps the most important is to start with RAW images wherever you can, preferably initially processed in Lightroom. At a pinch, you can start with a JPEG file but this may limit your later options and the quality of final image that you can achieve.



A second key principle is never to edit JPEGs. Always save ongoing edits as PSD or TIFF. JPEGs should only be used for your final 'prints'.

While Photoshop has a History panel which will undo several recent steps to repair mistakes, it cannot really be considered as a non-destructive tool. The number of steps stored in the history is limited by the amount of memory available and so it will not be possible to return to or reverse a step that is no longer stored. More importantly, returning to an early point in the editing history loses all of the later steps that you have made. Most important of all, the history disappears when you close Photoshop and can't be used in a later editing session.

As Photoshop evolved, additional non-destructive techniques have become possible. Some of the techniques described here work in older versions or in Elements; others require CS2, CS4, or later versions.

### Tools and Layers

#### *Cropping*

Versions of Photoshop CC since 2014 have a crop tool like the one in Lightroom, which is non-destructive by default. Very old versions had a crop tool which was permanent – parts of the image cropped out were totally deleted from the file and could not be restored, making cropping a destructive act. For a few versions there was an option to hide, rather than delete, the cropped area. The crop could then be changed later. This option was not the default, so if you are using an early version of Photoshop you need to change the setting for this option.

#### *Cloning and Healing*

Cloning and healing should all be done in a new blank layer, and not painted onto the main content layer (and so replacing the pixels in the original image). Pixels replaced on a main content layer cannot be recovered later if over-eagerly painted over by cloning. Cloned pixels on a new blank layer can be erased or faded for fine-tuning of edits.

#### *Dodge and Burn with an Overlay layer*

This is a non-destructive technique for localised dodging and burning, though there are better ways. Once again, the simple use of dodge and burn tools acting directly on original content layers should always be avoided.

Create a new blank layer, fill it with 50% grey, and set its blend mode to Overlay. The net effect will be of no visible changes. Then paint (at low flow) on the grey layer using only a soft-edged black or white brush. Painting with black will darken the area; painting with white will lighten it. Painted areas can be strengthened by repeated over-painting, or weakened by painting with some of the opposite colour (or grey). The overall effect can be moderated by adjusting the opacity of the Overlay layer.

#### *Sharpening with High-pass layer*

Many images benefit from some sharpening. Photoshop has several different sharpening filters, but using them directly creates a couple of problems:

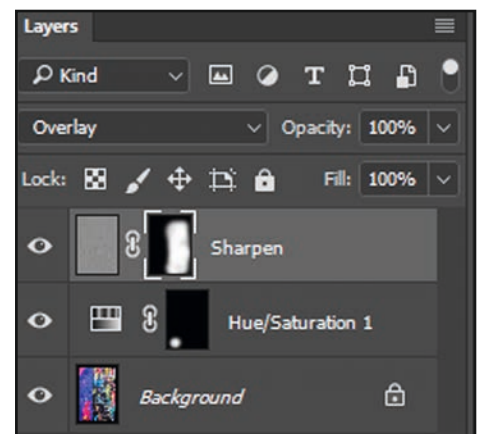
- firstly, they are destructive – they change the content of sharpened layer, and
- they apply to the entire image, and can't (for example) avoid sharpening clouds.

Smart objects can be used to avoid these problems, but another option is to use a 'High pass' layer. This should be done after other edits at or near the top of the 'layer stack'.

To use a 'high-pass' layer, create a new layer which is a copy of the entire content (Ctrl-Alt-Shift-E or Cmd-Opt-Shift-E). Filter with 'Other/High-pass', and set the blend mode of this new layer to Overlay.

You can experiment with different radius values for the filter – it corresponds to the sharpening radius that you may

be used to with other sharpening filters. As a separate sharpening layer, it can have its own mask to remove or reduce the sharpening effect in some parts. Alternatively, you can over-sharpen the layer and use the mask or opacity to pull it back to a reasonable look.



### Adjustment layers

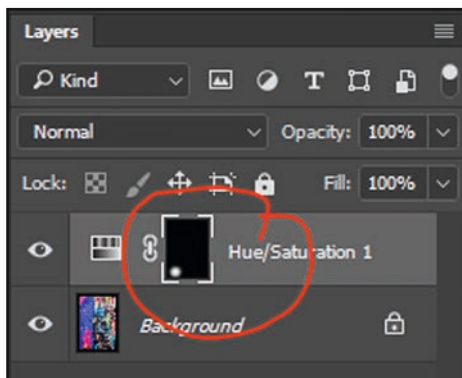
Adjustment layers are by far the most useful mechanism for non-destructive editing. These can

be used:

- for Levels, Curves and Exposure,
- for B/W conversion,
- for colour correction,
- and many other adjustments.

As a general rule, it is best to over-adjust and then reduce opacity and mask later. There are also options to consider by changing the blend mode of the adjustment layer. Sometimes Normal is not best and, for example, Luminosity may give a better result.

Every adjustment layer comes with a mask. It is often best to invert the default, white mask, which makes the adjustment disappear, and then to paint in the adjustment where required with a white paintbrush on the mask. As you only paint on the mask, mistakes are easily corrected with black paint.



Adjustment layer masks have many uses, for example:

- masking a darkening curve layer for vignettes,
- masking a contrast curve layer to draw the eye to the point of interest,
- fine detail masking to add contrast, perhaps to eyes and mouth, or to landscape texture, and
- masking a hue/saturation layer to modify a specific colour in a limited area only.

Since CS4, layer masks have non-destructive editable properties. These allow the mask to be feathered in an adjustable manner without a fixed amount of blur. While using the mask properties for feathering is the most useful option, there are many further properties which can be adjusted.

## Compositing

As layer masks have become more powerful and editable, they have become much more useful in compositing multi-layer images. Their use is not

restricted to adjustment layers. It may not always be necessary to cut out and feather a copy of an image component to layer on top of another, as the same result can be often achieved with a layer mask of a complete image, allowing the mask to be fine-tuned, refined and feathered at a later stage.

## Layer comps

When editing, it is sometimes desirable to try several approaches before deciding which one eventually to go with. These could be edited in different documents, each with a copy of the original content. But the different approaches can also be edited as different sets of layers within the same document. To compare two different approaches, it would then be necessary to turn on and off several different layers. But this goes through intermediate steps, which can make it tricky to analyse the differences on the screen.

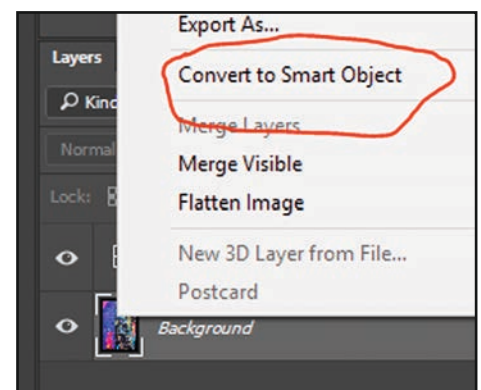
Using Layer Comps - one for each approach - makes this much easier. Then a single click can turn on and off all the related layers together, making it easy to alternate between the results of the different sets of edits used for each approach.

## Smart Objects

Smart Objects were introduced in Photoshop CS2, and in subsequent versions have grown in power to support a variety of non-destructive editing techniques.

The thinking behind a smart object is that it is a container for one or more layers of content.

Operations on the smart object are represented only as the instructions to perform some edit on that content. But the content embedded within the smart object is never changed by these operations; the editing instructions can always be changed - perhaps many times - with no impact on image quality.





### *For scaling, perspective, transformations, warping*

When a 'non-smart' image is scaled, or transformed (for perspective or warping, for example) the content pixels are over-written, with interpolation of new pixels or removal of unwanted pixels. Later transformations further change the already changed pixels, each step reducing image quality.

But if transformations are applied to a smart object, the transformations can be modified as many times as desired with no detrimental effect. This is most visibly demonstrated by scaling a picture down by a large percentage and then back up to the original scale. Without the use of a smart object, the image would become severely pixelated.

### *For RAW processing*

When a RAW image is developed (in Lightroom or Adobe Camera Raw) and then opened in Photoshop for further editing, a 'non-smart' image is 'rendered' based on the develop settings at that time. Thereafter it is no longer possible to revisit the RAW processing.

But if the developed image is opened in Photoshop as a smart object, the object's container contains the unprocessed RAW contents, which are then adjusted by the develop settings. But the smart object can be re-opened in Photoshop's RAW processing to change any develop settings as required.

### *For filtering*

Most, in fact almost all, Photoshop filters can be applied to a smart object. The benefit is that the filter parameters can be edited later. Typical uses include:

- sharpening, including Unsharp mask, and Smart Sharpening,
- blurring, including Gaussian, surface, field, iris and motion blur effects,
- local transformations, such as Liquefy, Puppet warp and Perspective warp,
- classic Photoshop filters for artistic effect, and
- use of external tools such as Nik and OnOne.

A smart object can have several different filters applied, stacked up in the manner of adjustment layers. Each filter has its own opacity and blend mode, and can be turned on or off individually.

### *Smart object filter masks and nesting*

A smart object used for filtering has a mask which specifies where in the image the filters apply and by how much. There is a single filter mask for all filters on the smart object, which may appear to be a

limitation but it is one that is easy to get around.

Smart objects can be nested. The container that is the smart

object can contain layers, groups or further smart objects; and each nested smart object can have filters with its own filter mask for those filters alone.

### *Create smart objects by placing*

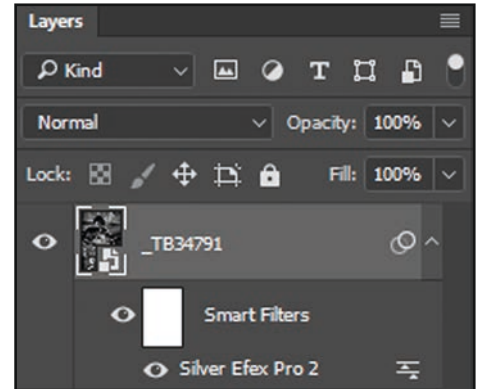
When using layers to construct images by compositing from multiple source images, smart objects are invaluable. For example, the scale perspective of an added object can be repeatedly fine-tuned to match the background. When adding new source images as additional layers, it is always possible to copy and paste, to construct a 'normal' layer, which can then be converted to a smart image. But it is more efficient to 'Place' the additional image using the 'Place Embedded' (not 'Place Linked') menu command, which adds it as a smart object in a single action.

## **In conclusion**

The use of non-destructive techniques to edit images offers a number of advantages. The key benefit of these techniques is that you do not alter your original image data. As a result, you can backtrack on the adjustments that you have made to an image, whether you make an error or simply don't like the final look.

Another useful aspect of non-destructive editing is that you can 're-use' your work. As time passes, one's taste can change and a new approach to a particular image may come to mind, or the perfect competition entry might be just one or two steps away from some earlier edits.

And if it all goes wrong, you can always start again!





## All in the blink of an eye



**GARY EVANS FRPS** talks of his fondness for high-speed photography and explains how almost all of us can capture in camera the things our eyes might miss.

One of the pleasures of coordinating the International Images for Science Exhibition (IISE) is being able to showcase the wide range of photographic techniques being used. My personal favourite is high-speed, as it was my own speciality on my degree course. Capturing those things that happen in the blink of an eye (or faster) is achievable by anyone with the right knowledge. One thing is for sure, high-speed is considerably more straightforward with digital cameras than in the days of film!

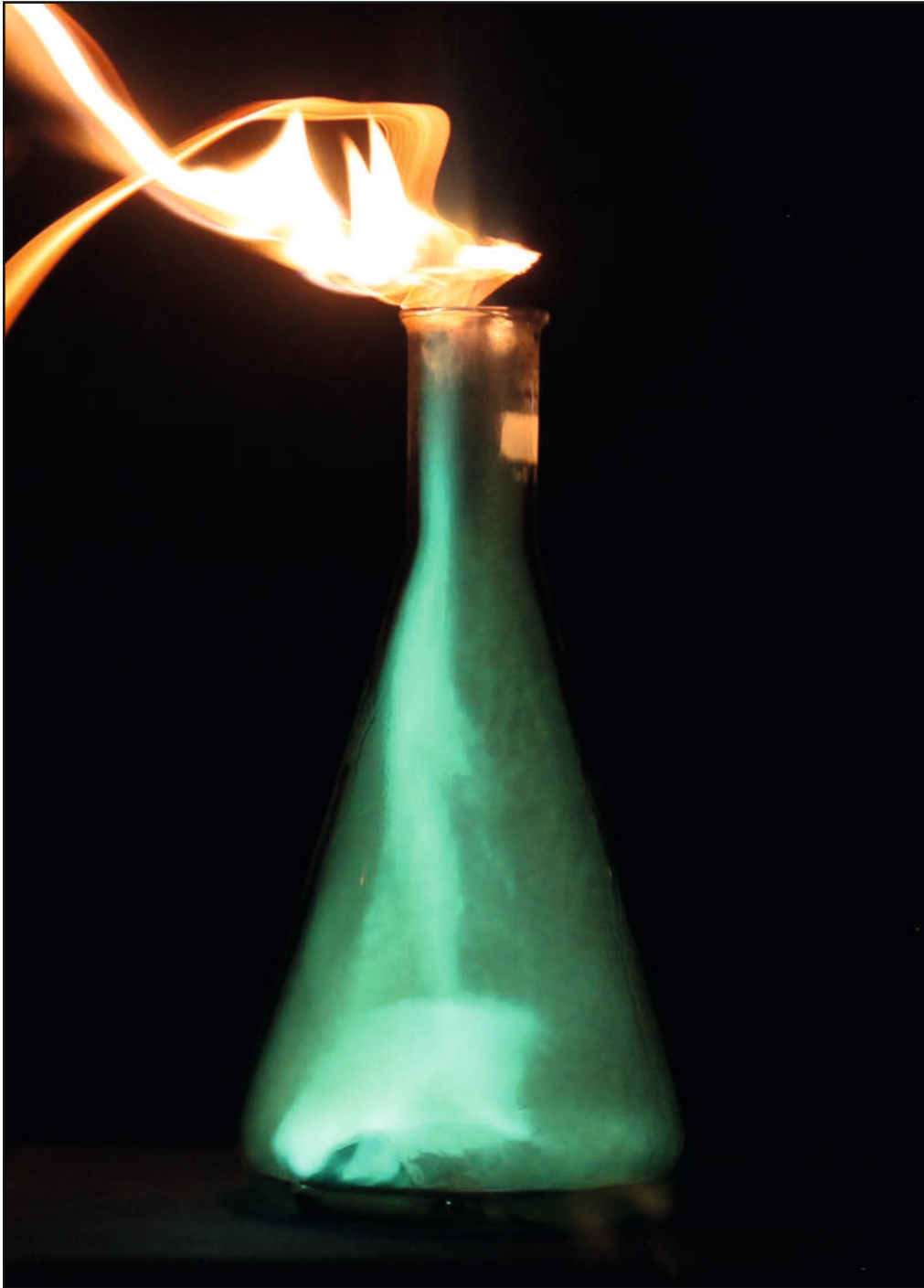
There are two essentials for high-speed photography; a means of synchronising the exposure with the event you are trying to capture

and lots of light. Some recent IISE images show how these problems are overcome.

The first consideration is light and there are three ways to get enough. The first is simply sunlight. Many DSLR cameras have mechanical shutter speeds of 1/8000th second available. With CCDs being able to run at relatively high ISO settings with an acceptable resulting image quality, taking high-speed images in ambient light is mainly now an issue of timing.

In the photo above, taken by Richard Beech, a combination of fast shutter speed, high ISO, ambient light and great timing show how a soap bubble 'unwraps' as it bursts instead of 'popping'





all at once. The exposure was 1/2000th sec at ISO3200.

Second is photographing a self-luminous event. A common example of this would be lightning – a natural a combination of very high intensity and very short duration. This is only practical when the shape of what is being photographed doesn't change during the exposure, a big problem in 'open shutter' exposures in studios (see below). In the natural world, the perfect example of a self-luminous event would be lightning.

In the image above, taken by Georgia Rawlins, hydrogen gas in a cylindrical flask is ignited. The

flask has previously contained a copper solution hence the greenish colour to the flame. The yellow at top left is the trail left by the burning splint used to ignite the gas.

Finally, we may go into the studio and provide enough lighting, either continuous or flash. Continuous lighting is essential for high-speed video, although suitable lights can be expensive. Normal continuous lighting has a slight flicker, at about 50 times per second, a result of the alternating current electricity supplies we use. This means that your image could be under- or over-exposed depending on the exact moment at which the exposure is made. To cure this, you

need lights with a fully smoothed power supply. However, most of the time, stills are best shot using electronic flash.

The use of electric sparks to provide very short, very bright illumination has been the subject of experiment since the time of Fox Talbot in 1850. However, the science and the art of high-speed flash photography owe an enormous debt to Professor Harold 'Doc' Edgerton (1903-90), who invented the modern flashtube.

The exposure time available from an electronic flash is frequently given as the 't.5' time – the time during which the light output is above 50% of its full value (some of you may know this as the 'half-peak' time). With everyday flash units, the duration of the flash itself is longer the more power that is used. To use the Nikon Speedlight SB-800 as an example, at full manual power the t.5 time is 1/1050th second, at 1/128th manual power the t.5 duration is 1/41600th second. Of course, this is quite a trade-off, 7 stops less light to achieve a 40 times shorter duration.

For the ultimate in high-speed flash photography, there are specialist units that have flash durations of less than a microsecond (millionth of a second) and enough intensity to light a small studio space. These utilize extremely high voltages and fast-acting capacitors and much of their high cost is in making them safe to use. These are units that you certainly don't want to open up and poke about inside!

The image below, taken by Sawyer Flint, of a light bulb exploding as it is hit by a bullet, has

been captured using a professional high-speed flash unit.

Our other big problem is getting the timing right. As any high-speed photographer will tell you, their methods rely on a very large dose of trial and error!

For many studio images, an open shutter technique is easiest. The studio is in darkness, the shutter on the camera opened, the event is triggered and the flash units fire, and then the shutter can be closed. As there is no ambient light, the only thing that records is the event itself. Of course, the trick is to set the flash units to fire at just the right time!

To achieve this, there are a variety of trigger units available. Most of these pick up motion or sound, add a delay then trigger the flash units. For example, consider the classic shooting a balloon with a gun. The trigger can be set up to detect the bullet as it leaves the barrel by breaking a light beam, or to use a small microphone to detect sound of the gun firing. An adjustable delay circuit means that the bullet can be captured in different parts of its flight. In one frame, a shorter delay shows the bullet just entering the balloon, in another a longer delay shows the balloon burst completely.

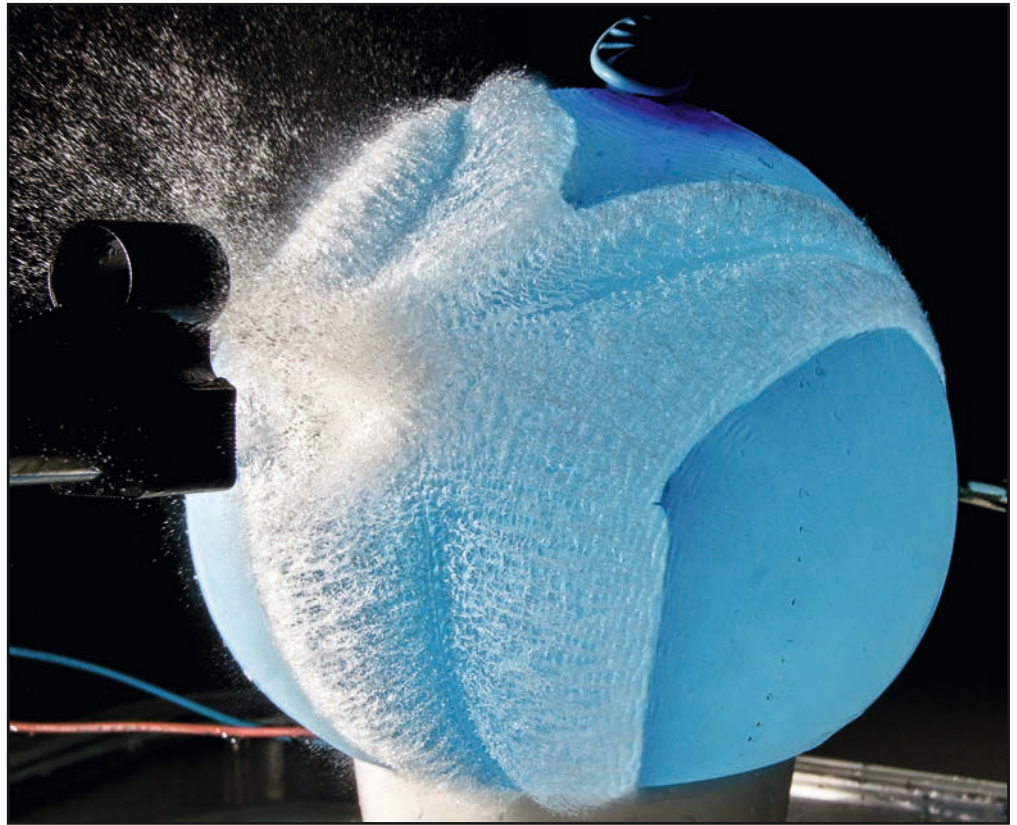
An example, taken by André Castellan, is shown on the next page. A sound detector was used to pick up the sound of an air rifle firing, which allowed an image to be captured at the moment that a balloon unpeels as it bursts.





## GARY EVANS

If all this sounds like it is too much trouble, please remember that many of these techniques are really just an extension of skills we all learn as a photographer – principle among these is control of lighting. So why not have a go? Some of the images in IISE were taken with very simple set-ups, just with skill in timing, lighting and composition. Careful planning and a desire to experiment can open a new creative route for any photographer to capture that blink of an eye.



Gary Evans FRPS is the RPS' Science Exhibition Coordinator. Gary will be talking us through techniques for capturing high-speed images at the DI Expo.

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## Hoverfly Landing

**Alan Cork LRPS**

Globe thistles are both photogenic and frequently visited by insects. My initial intention was to take a macro photograph of an insect in flight as it approached a flower head. With an interest in entomology, my efforts were primarily directed towards capturing an insect fully in focus with wings blurred to give a feeling of movement. No easy proposition, as anyone who has tried will tell you. Still, by watching which direction and times of day insects visited the flowers I was able to select days when conditions were good for macro photography with light winds and little cloud cover.

Most publications suggest using manual focus for macro, but I prefer to use auto-focus even though I know my rate of success might be compromised. I typically use speed-lights, pre-positioned off camera, and check the exposure before insects arrive. I try to improve my chances of getting an insect fully in focus by using a good quality primary macro lens (Nikon 105 mm) and preserve detail using a low ISO setting of 100.

I knew that I could not get all the flower in focus in a single photograph and so started by taking a series of images adjusting the plane of focus by hand in each one, with the camera held on a tripod. The intention was then to manually combine the images in order to render a single image of the thistle fully in focus. I then needed to capture an insect as it approached the flower head while maintaining the same position relative to the flower. Hoverflies turned out to be ideal subjects as they move relatively slowly in the proximity of the flower, enabling me to get several photographs as they approached. Nevertheless, when I had finished the session I took another series of images of the thistle head and in fact it was these that I later used in the final image. This was necessary in part because the lighting had changed during the session and even in the light wind the flower head was far from stationary.

Before the images could be combined they were worked up using Camera Raw Filter in Photoshop to bring detail out of the shadows. Combining the images was then relatively straight forward. A series of six images were selected and loaded into a Stack in Photoshop, and using the auto-align function the flower heads were brought into alignment. Layer masks were then applied and the hoverflies were selectively introduced into the final image and the flower presented as a fully focused entity. Of course, there is always an element of luck in so far as the insects selected in the image did not overlap at all. For me the finished image not only shows a hoverfly in flight, but also extraordinary dexterity and control, as the whole body was manoeuvred in preparation for landing.





## SKELTAL TREE ON RANNOCH MOOR

**Alan Bousfield ARPS**

This image comprises of just two pictures both taken on the RPS Northern Region Landscape Workshop in Glencoe during October 2011. The workshop was organised by Jane Black, then the Regional Organiser, and the tutor for the 5 days was Duncan McEwan, who took us to some fantastic locations.

On the morning of the first day we were taken to the location of this fantastically shaped Skeletal Tree that stood in isolation on this part of Rannoch Moor.

The image was then taken into Photoshop and I applied a curves layer to lighten up the tree and, 3 levels layers to lighten some small areas, and the customary removal of unwanted items. This brought out the feeling of the day, as can be seen by the rainbow, wet.

The overlay or texture was one of a number of images taken at Ballachulish Slate Quarry where, when you look closely where the slate has been cut you can see some interesting colours. I then enhanced the colours and detail using one of Guy Gowen's process actions.

The next stage, again in Photoshop, was to insert the Skeletal Tree image over that of the Slate Texture and reduce its opacity to 80%, thus allowing the slate colours to be seen in the sky and mountains. I then used a Levels Layer on Auto to produce a full range of colours and lighten the image.



*The original image*



*The original image after the work in Photoshop*



*The slate texture*



Original RAW file



Final image

## LONE TREE

**Peter Stevens ARPS**

Lone trees are hardly original subjects for landscape photography but this tree seemed different. It was taken on the shore of Ullswater in the Lake District. As soon as I saw it, it stopped me in my tracks.

It immediately struck me as visually compelling and full of photographic opportunities. The lone tree was itself an interesting shape. Its location, positioned precariously on a small island of land and surrounded by water, was unusual. But it was the long root stretching out like a ship's hawser, seemingly tethering the tree to the land and stopping it from floating away, added more photographic possibilities.

Compositionally I knew I wanted tree to be centrally positioned with the long root providing a lead in line, but placing the horizon needed more careful thought. It was really important that the distant trees on the opposite shore didn't cut into the branches, and also that their reflection in the lake didn't cut into the little island. This required a surprising amount of moving back and forth, up and down and zooming in and out. Having finally decided on my position, I set up the camera on the tripod.

The camera was a Nikon D750 with a 16-35mm Nikkor. I used a x10 filter to give me a long exposure (30s at  $f/8$ ) so as to smooth the water and soften the sky. I often bracket my exposures and blend the files to ensure I get rich detail in the highlights and shadows, but on this occasion the overall soft lighting enabled me to get all the detail in one exposure.

Deciding how to develop the RAW file I find often involves a bit a trial and error, and experimentation. This can be surprisingly difficult, and for me is itself part of the creative process. In this case there were a number adjustments that were fairly obvious. The little island had to be lightened up along with the tree trunk and the long root. The autumn leaves in the foreground had to be given prominence whilst holding back the grassy mounds. And the distant woods on the far shore needed to be lightened and the shadow detail brought through. I also wanted to develop the contrasting colours of the blue/grey sky with the red/browns of the foreground leaves.

I made overall adjustments in tone, clarity, vibrance and sharpening. I also made local adjustments using the brush tool to lighten the distant woods and separately to add saturation and detail to the foreground leaves. I adjusted white balance and hue to create the colour contrast, and finally I added a radial filter to create a slight vignette.





## GRACE

**David Thomas ARPS**

If the word 'quirky' comes to mind when you see one of my images, then I will have achieved at least one of my aims. I try to create images with a twist; something that suggests a story, or at least makes you look twice. In my studio work, I like to create simple sets – preferably including something unexpected or unusual. Typically, this will be something I've made, or some bits and bobs from junk shops and vintage fairs. In this case, I set the table for dinner, and included a selection of old bisque doll parts, held in position with Blu-tack.

I had a number of versions of the image to choose from, with various hand positions and facial expressions. This is one of my favourites; I really like how the peaceful facial expression contrasts with the scary contents of the bowl.

Even with studio flash, I usually work with a tripod and remote release; this makes me think more about

composition, and also makes it easier to swap elements from one image to another if needed. For this set-up, I chose a wide aperture to give a relatively shallow depth of field and throw the background completely out of focus.

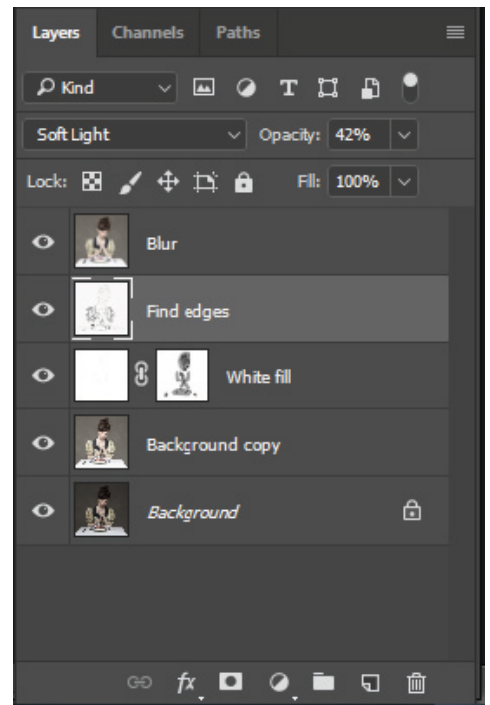
'Grace' is almost a straight shot – originally the soup dish contained only doll parts, but on the day after it was taken I decided to re-shoot the dish, this time including soup, and substituted it using Photoshop. After a clean-up of minor specks and spots, I thought about what sort of final look would work best. Rather than play on the 'dark' impression of the image, I wondered what would happen if I went for a softer, lighter look.

I picked up and tried a number of ideas and approaches from the internet and, after some experimentation, I arrived at an image with the following layers (see right):

- Blur – copy of the background copy, increased brightness, 60% Gaussian blur, 'multiply' blending mode, 70% opacity.
- Find edges – mono copy of background layer, reduced contrast and 'find edges' filter applied; 'overlay' blending mode, approx. 40% opacity.
- White fill – copy of the background copy, increased brightness, fill with white, 'soft light' blending mode, approx 70% opacity
- Background copy – levels adjustment to increase brightness

A layer mask was used to balance the effect of the white layer, and to add back contrast and sharpness in areas such as hair and details on the dress and the soup bowl.

Like so many of my images, 'Grace' combines a quirky idea captured in camera, and experimentation with Photoshop – sometimes it's awful, sometimes it works.



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