Welcome to LEEposure, the new online magazine from LEE Filters. We’re not here to bring you a technical manual, but to demonstrate the exciting and creative world that opens up when you use filters in your photography.

Despite the fact that the majority of photographers now use image-manipulation software to perfect their pictures, filters have never been so popular. The value of ensuring, as far as possible, that the image is correct at the exposure stage is now widely recognised, and filters play a big part in this. After all, who wants to spend time burning in a sky on a computer, when the simple addition of a neutral-density grad would have sorted the problem out at the start?

In this issue, we interview the renowned and influential landscape photographer Colin Prior. There aren’t many enthusiasts who aren’t aware of his dramatic Scottish panoramic images. For his latest project, however, he is heading to the isolated and epic landscape of the Karakoram – a mountain range that is so much more than the infamous K2. Read about this body of work on page six.

Away from the mountains of Pakistan, we head to the city with Craig Roberts, who loves the ease of using compact system cameras and the Seven5 filter system when he’s in an urban environment. Find out more on page 50. In addition, we ask three photographers to pick apart (not literally) one of their favourite pictures in Anatomy of a Landscape (page 44), while black-and-white specialist Jonathan Chritchley takes us on a Composition Masterclass (page 22).

There’s plenty more to whet your photographic appetite. We hope you enjoy the issue.

Contributors

- Colin Prior
- Jonathan Chritchley
- Andy Harris
- Thras Moraitis
- Ursula Lawrence
- Billy Lynn
- Julie Hall
- Cheryl Meek
- Jurgen Benincia
- Max Witjes
- Craig Roberts
- Mark Denton
- Lynne Douglas
- David West

Fuji X-Pro1 with 14mm lens, 6 seconds at f/11, Seven5 Little Stopper and 0.6 ND hard grad. Photograph by Graham Merritt.
CALL OF THE WILD

Landscape photographer Colin Prior reveals the story behind what he hopes will be considered his finest work.

BALANCING ACT

Know you need a neutral-density graduated filter, but not quite sure how to use it? Our introduction to the versatile and picture-changing ND grad should help you see the light.

As a photographer who shoots exclusively in black and white, Jonathan Chritchley has developed a keen eye for the minimal composition. Here, he explains the stories behind three of his photographs.

GALLERY

Reading about how to use filters is one thing – seeing the sorts of pictures that can be created with them is another. Be inspired by our gallery to get out there with your camera.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Stumped by your filters? We can help.

ANATOMY OF A LANDSCAPE

Three top photographers break a favourite image down into its component parts, analysing what makes it work and why.

CITY STORIES

For Craig Roberts, the excitement of the urban environment provides an endless source of inspiration.
Landscape photographer Colin Prior needs little introduction. His reputation has been founded on his panoramic images of the Scottish mountains – photographs which often require him to withstand weather conditions that can best be described as challenging. His unerring passion for, and exhaustive knowledge of these mountains runs deep, their Gaelic names tripping off his tongue easily as he speaks warmly of them.

But it is a different location entirely that has captured his imagination for his most recent project: the Karakoram mountain range. The body of work he aims to create there will involve several trips over the next few years, culminating in a book that Prior believes will be his “magnum opus.”

The inspiration for this body of work has a celebrated American photographer, the late Galen Rowell, at its source. In 1977, Rowell, who died in a plane crash in 2002, published the book *In The Throne Room Of The Mountain Gods*. Now out of print, the book, about a failed attempt to scale K2, features spectacular images from the Karakoram range. And, as rudimentary as its print quality was, the book inspired Prior who, as he puts it, “had it on almost permanent loan from the local library.”

It was only a matter of time before Prior would make his own way to this mysterious and majestic range, which straddles the borders of China, India and Pakistan, and which includes K2 as just one of the many awe-inspiring mountains along its 311-mile length.

Prior first visited the region in 1996, while working on a commission for British Airways. He returned in 2004 on a personal trip, but it has taken him until now to find what he calls the “mechanism” to return and make a substantial body of work of the region. Part of that mechanism includes sponsorship from the likes of LEE Filters, Rab clothing and Lowepro. But what is it that draws him there? “What separates the Karakoram from any other range of mountains is their diversity of shape – the very vertical nature of the mountains,” he explains. “They’re not like majority of the Himalaya, which are massive bulks of rock covered in snow, and which...
can present rather monotonous walls of rock with blue sky above. The Karakoram is a gallery of shape and form, and the raw material has so much potential."

Getting to such a remote part of the world in order to spend several weeks there is no mean feat in itself – and that’s before even thinking about making an exposure. The journey involves flying to Islamabad, then onto the market town of Skardu. From there, the two gateway towns into the Karakoram are either Askole or Hushe. For Prior’s most recent trip, in 2013, some 50 porters were involved at one point or another over the five-week expedition, with some groups going ahead to drop food at points further up the glacier. “You need time to become acclimatised,” he says, “and you need to have these groups to look after you.”

Thanks to K2, the region is a draw for climbers, but remains largely unexplored as a purely photographic subject. However, Prior expects this to change over the coming years. “In the course of time – although perhaps not in my lifetime – India and Pakistan are going to have to co-operate if they are to move forward,” he says. “When that happens, I think there will be a great deal of commercialisation of the Karakoram. If it were anywhere else in the world, there would be a million people going through it every year. As it is at the moment, I have an opportunity to photograph in a way that won’t be possible in the future.”

It’s when Prior starts to wax lyrical about the region that it becomes clear just how much he appreciates the opportunity to photograph in this landscape. “The Karakoram is created from these eroded pieces of granite that retain an amazing shape. You find yourself in an amphitheatre, usually on top of a glacier, within these vertical mountains – it’s an environment where you’re not in control of anything.”

The nature of the landscape is such that Prior found himself favouring telephoto lenses over the wideangles he would normally choose in his more familiar Scotland. “Because you have very clear views towards the mountains’ spires in the Karakoram, telephotos give you a separation rather than the convergence of wideangles,” he explains.

The lenses also helped him capture the light at its best – conditions that are particularly fleeting in this kind of...
environment. “In the Karakoram, it tends to be just the mountains’ summits that catch the really great colour. That light hits maybe just the top fifth or sixth of the mountain, and the rest stays in shadow. So it’s about using the lenses to pull out interesting shapes and hues.”

He continues, “If you’re at altitude in a mountain you’ve got two colours – blue and white. Overcoming this repetition is a big challenge for the photographer.”

So, as well as taking in the sheer might of the mountains, he also looks for more intimate details among the rocks and rivers of the region. There were also technical issues to overcome. Alongside his kit of the Canon EOS 5D Mark III and Canon EOS-1D X, with its attendant telephoto and tilt-and-shift lenses, Prior also carried a LEE Filters system. “For any landscape photographer, neutral density grads are absolutely crucial,” he asserts. “Some landscape photographers like the ‘hit’ you get from a hard grad, but great filtration should be about invisibility. There’s a trend for people to over-saturate images and, for me, creating an unnatural rendition of the natural world is the biggest turn-off. It’s not real, and photographers are pushing their pictures beyond the realms of reality.”

For him, the most fundamental rule – and the one that should never be broken – is that the sky should always remain brighter than the landscape, however moody and atmospheric it may be. Anything else is simply false – not to mention contrived. “Soft grads are the most crucial filters in this environment,” he says. “The reason I use them is because they help me create what I’m seeing, and they compress the range into something the camera sensor is capable of recording. It’s about perfecting the composition in camera, so that your exposure is perfect. If you get the histogram right and put the filter in place, when you drop the image into Lightroom, all you have to do is polish it up a bit. That’s what photography is about.”

If there’s one aspect of this project that Prior is adamant about, it’s that bodies of work such as this are increasingly difficult to produce in this day and age. He is fortunate to have time on his side: with two further trips planned, he has the opportunity to build a collection of photographs of the region that unveil it in a way that hasn’t been done before. “I hope to create a legacy that will live a little beyond me,” he says. “I have lived through a period in photography that’s coming to an end. The path I’ve followed in my career would be impossible for others now, as people expect images for nothing. There has been a democratisation of photography, but its currency has been devalued. It will always remain as an art form, however, as you can never automate someone’s ability to see.”

For Prior, this project has it all: drama, exploration and challenges aplenty. But not everyone understands his passion for it. “Someone asked me why on earth I wanted to go to Pakistan – saying it’s dangerous and undeveloped,” Prior laughs. “He said, ‘Go and photograph the golf courses in Scotland!’ And dull is the last thing anyone could accuse this epic project of being.”

Great Trango, Baltoro Glacier
Rising in spires, cathedrals and towers, the dramatic shapes of the Karakoram Mountains elevate them above any other mountain range in the world. They are truly unique.

Ebony 45SU with Schneider 400mm f/5.6 Apo-Vita Normar lens, Velvia 50, Polariser

Cathedral Towers, Baltoro Glacier
The late evening light creates dramatic modelling on the angular architecture of Cathedral Towers, which is so characteristic of the Karakoram Mountain. The effect is like serrated sharks’ teeth.

Canon EOS 5D Mark III with EF 300mm f/4L IS USM, ISO 100, 1/80sec at f/10

Trango Towers, Baltoro Glacier
A break in the clouds throws the Trangos into the early morning sunlight, which transforms the scene into three dimensions. This was the most successful image from the three mornings I spent at this spot.

Canon EOS 5D Mark III with EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM lens, ISO 100, 1/100sec at f/10, 0.6 ND soft grad
Balancing Act

It has been written and said many times that the purpose of a filter is to replicate the scene as it appears to the human eye. Neither the highest-quality film nor the most sensitive camera sensor can capture, in one frame, the dynamic range that exists in so many scenes. This is the reason why, in a typical landscape shot that is taken without filters, the sky can appear washed out and featureless or the foreground underexposed.

It is with very good reason, then, that the neutral-density graduated filter (ND grad) is rarely absent from the landscape photographer’s kit bag.

WHAT IS AN ND GRAD?

Neutral-density graduated filters are sometimes mistakenly referred to as grey grads. However, a true neutral-density grad is completely without hue – they’re called ‘neutral’ for a reason. Whereas a grey grad would tint the area covered by the filter with grey, an ND grad simply darkens the area and has no effect on the colour balance of the photograph.

A LEE Filters neutral-density grad is rectangular in shape. The neutral dye covers one half of the filter, with the other half remaining clear. Like all its siblings in the LEE Filters system, the filter slides up and down in the holder, giving the photographer complete control over which portion of the frame the neutral-density area covers, and which remains unaffected by the filter.

There are two types of ND grad: hard and soft. A hard grad has a slightly sharper transition between the neutral-density and clear sections of the filter, while a soft grad has a much more gradual transition. Hard grads are

FOR A NATURAL RESULT, ALWAYS ENSURE THE SKY REMAINS BRIGHTER THAN THE FOREGROUND.

No filter

0.6 ND hard grad

0.9 ND hard grad

Photograph by Joe Cornish

LEE neutral density hard grad filter set

LEE neutral density soft grad filter set
the filter of choice for most professional photographers in any situation when there is a defined horizon separating the sky from the foreground. Although it is sometimes assumed that a soft grad would be used when an object such as a tree or building encroaches into the sky, this isn’t actually the case – the hard grad has just enough feathering between the dye and the clear areas to create a natural transition.

Soft grads tend to be used in situations where there is a less defined line between light and dark – in woodland, for example. In such an environment, the brighter area of the scene might not be at the top of the frame – it could just as easily be a rock formation or an area of water.

The three most popular strengths of ND grad are 0.3, 0.6 and 0.9, with 0.3 equating to one stop, 0.6 two stops and 0.9 three stops. There are also 0.45 and 0.75 ND grads, which equate to 1½ and 2½ stops respectively.

TO CREATE A SENSE OF MOVEMENT, USE AN ND STANDARD FILTER TO GIVE A LONGER SHUTTER SPEED, AND AN ND GRAD TO BALANCE THE EXPOSURE.

USING AN ND GRAD

With so many digital cameras featuring live view these days, using an ND grad couldn’t be simpler. With the adaptor ring and filter holder attached to your lens, set your camera to manual mode, take a meter reading of the sky, then take a second meter reading of the foreground. The ND grad you choose will be based on these readings.

For example, you may have decided upon an aperture of f/16 and an ISO of 100 for your image. If, at these settings, your meter reading for the sky suggests a shutter speed of 1/15sec, and 1/4sec for the foreground, the difference between them is two stops, so you would choose a 0.3 ND grad. This is because it is usually recommended that the sky should remain half to one stop brighter than the foreground. If you were to use a 0.6 ND grad in this situation, the light would be even throughout the image, and the result is likely to be flat.

If the sky gave a reading of 1/30sec and the foreground 1/4sec, then the difference is three stops and your ND grad of choice would be the 0.6 version.

When it comes to dialling the meter reading into your camera, always use the reading for the area to be left uncovered by the filter – usually the foreground. In our example above, that would be 1/4sec at f/16 and ISO 100. If you were to dial in the reading for the sky, your resulting image would be underexposed.

Once you have set up your composition, taken your readings and dialled them into your camera, all that’s left is to slide your ND grad into the filter holder. If you are using live view, you will be able to clearly see the effect that the filter is achieving, and tell exactly where to place it. If you don’t have live view, all is not lost by >>
any means. Because the effect of an ND grad is subtle, simply positioning the area of transition around the area where it is required should be sufficient.

CREATIVE USE OF ND GRADS

Of course, ND grads don’t have to be used in isolation, and capturing an authentic representation of the scene in front of you isn’t only about balancing the exposure between sky and foreground. Study the technical information that accompanies many photographs, and you will notice ND grads being used in combination with anything from warm-up filters to polarisers. In addition to this, you might see a photographer using, for example, a 0.6 ND grad across the entirety of the sky, then a 0.3 ND grad just along the top of the image, in order to create an extra hint of drama and mood in the sky.

There are also occasions when a photographer might use an ND grad upside down, covering a portion of the bottom of the frame. One example of this might be when photographing a beach scene in which the foreground is predominantly made up of very bright sand. And, because the LEE Filters holder can be rotated, you can also use neutral-density grads at an angle, to balance the exposure in a corner of the frame. The possibilities are almost endless.

IF YOU DON’T HAVE LIVE VIEW, USE YOUR DEPTH-OF-FIELD PREVIEW BUTTON TO ASSESS THE EFFECT OF THE ND GRAD ON YOUR IMAGE.
It’s often said that, in order to be a good photographer, you should have a passion for something other than photography. For Jonathan Chritchley, it was a love of the sea that brought him to photography, and the pivotal point was when he saw Luc Besson’s 1988 film *The Big Blue*.

“The first ten or twelve minutes are in black and white, and are beautifully shot,” he explains. “It took my breath away and I ended up watching that opening sequence about 20 times. Everything clicked into place: photography, the sea, and black and white.”

At the time, Chritchley was in his early twenties, and admits he lacked the knowledge and experience to get a photography business off the ground. As a result, he fell back on his second love – surfing – and ended up working in Biarritz, France’s surfing capital. Seven years on, and freshly armed with the marketing and business skills he had lacked before, he returned to photography and has never looked back. Over the past eight years, since turning professional, Chritchley has developed a style for minimal, spare, monochrome images that have won him clients that include P&O Cruises and Ralph Lauren.

Speaking of his compositional style, Chritchley says, “I like things to have space. I tend to go wide, to give the subject room to breathe. Most of my compositions are about what’s not there rather than what is.”

Black church, Iceland

“When I got to this little church – which is about three hours from Reykjavik – several other photographers were already there. They were all shooting it from the front, where some rather nice gates framed the doorway, but I went round to the back, where a field of long grass, battered by the harsh coastal winds, provided an excellent lead-in line. I decided that a very wide angle lens would reinforce the isolation and fragility of this little black building, so fitted a 21mm lens to my camera. At first, I composed with the church placed much lower in the frame, because there was an amazing sky. However, it didn’t work, so I pushed the church up to the top of the frame. The wind was howling, and usually I would use that to my advantage to convey movement in the sky. However, this time, the foreground grass achieved this, looking almost like moving water.

With a picture such as this, I tend to know what I want and how long the exposure needs to be for the effect I’m visualising. On this occasion, it was important that the movement in the grass didn’t detract from the church, which I knew I wanted to be the most important element in the frame. I like its darkness, and that’s what you notice first, before anything else. It tells a story.”

* Nikon D3X with Zeiss 21mm Distagon lens, ISO 100, 20 seconds at f/18, 0.9 ND soft grad

Nikon D3X with Zeiss 21mm Distagon lens, ISO 100, 20 seconds at f/18, 0.9 ND soft grad
“This photograph was taken in the Aude – an area of the Languedoc in France – where there are lots of rootsy little fishing villages. After the fishermen have finished for the day, they hang their nets over poles to dry. I had spotted these poles and their nets in daylight earlier on in the trip, and decided to shoot them in low light. After some fairly hazardous 4x4 driving to get to the location, I set up my camera and started to shoot as the light faded. At first, there was some cloud cover, but then suddenly the moon appeared. I hadn’t planned for it to happen this way at all – it was just one of those lucky accidents that occurs from time to time. I tried to position myself with the moon placed to one side of the nets, and then on the other, before finally realising it had to be slap bang in the middle of the frame to really work for me.

The moon, or should I say the Earth, moves surprisingly quickly, so very long exposures don’t work at all – one just gets a light-toned blur where the moon should be. As a result, for this image I used what is relatively speaking quite a short exposure – as you can see from the slight ripple in the water. I also fitted a longer lens than I would normally use – a 70-200mm telephoto – to compress the scene and make the moon appear bigger.”
LOWRY HORSES, CAMARGUE

“There was a dawn mist and it was incredibly still when I arrived at this lagoon in the Camargue region of France at around 5.30am. This is a rare thing in the Camargue, as the Mistral wind often blows through the region, causing the water to ripple. However, on this particular morning, the stillness of the water meant the reflections showed only the barest ripple. In fact, I didn’t realise how good the reflections were until I saw the images on my computer later. There wasn’t a sound apart from the breathing of the horses and it was one of those moments when life outside of the viewfinder ceases to exist.

Everything in this photograph happens in the bottom third of the frame – in the top two thirds there’s literally nothing, other than the gradient effect of the neutral-density grad to hold back the brightness of the sky. This is a compositional technique I find myself using a great deal in order to create an isolated, minimal feel. And although I was working with moving, living creatures – rather than a landscape and long exposures – I still wanted to convey a sense of stillness, space and peace.

I took more photographs and worked a lot more quickly than I would normally, because I didn’t want to miss the moment. Almost inevitably, this was the last picture I took. By this point, I had been photographing the horses for two or three minutes and their curiosity and friskiness was starting to get the better of them. The two horses on the far right went nose to nose, and the one in the middle pricked up its ears, taking a great interest in what I was doing. It then began to walk towards me, so the reflections – and the moment – disappeared.”

Nikon D3X with Nikkor 24-70mm f/2.8 lens, ISO 400, 1/125 second at f/13, 0.6 ND soft grad

Gallery

READING ABOUT HOW TO USE FILTERS IS ONE THING – SEEING THE SORTS OF PICTURES THAT CAN BE CREATED WITH THEM IS ANOTHER. BE INSPIRED BY THIS SELECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS, ALL TAKEN BY STUDENTS WHO HAVE ATTENDED THE LEE FILTERS WORKSHOPS
In the past, I had struggled with the technique of balancing the exposure between dark foreground and bright sky, never quite being happy either with using average exposure or blowing out the highlights in the sky. This is one of the pictures that helped to change all that. While on a trip to Dorset, I was immediately drawn to this pier, thanks to the contrast between the ochre-coloured paving stones and the grey-blue sea and sky. In addition, the narrowing parallel lines of the paving draw the viewer’s eye towards the prominent beacon and, ultimately, over the railing towards the horizon.

I decided to use the Big Stopper, which helped me to extend the exposure to 15 seconds. This smoothed the sea, while also creating movement in the clouds. In addition, a 0.9 ND hard grad enhanced the depth and moodiness of the sky. A circular polariser intensified the colour of the sky and removed any unwanted reflections in the sea and on the metal railings. As the focal point is approximately one third into the length of the pier, I aimed to maximise the sharpness throughout the image by setting the aperture to f/11.

My intention was to provide the viewer with a strong sense of being drawn towards the sea, of wanting to walk down the pier in the hope that it would launch them on a mystery journey across the seemingly tranquil ocean – over the horizon, under the watchful, moody sky.

I discovered this very pretty little valley, not far from Morzine, while mountain biking in the French Alps. It was a hard cycle up from Les Gets, and by the time we arrived at this spot I was suffering from a major sense of humour failure. However, this was soon quashed by the view. It was tricky to find a good angle for this shot. The slope where I was standing is steep, and it was quite difficult to fit everything in, retain some foreground interest and ensure the chapel spire wasn’t lost in the backdrop of the mountains. Without filters, the image would have suffered from a very overexposed sky. Prior to this trip, I had attended two workshops run by LEE Filters, during which I learned the correct way to use neutral-density graduated filters, and how to produce a photograph that is correctly exposed for both foreground and sky.

After taking light readings, I selected a 0.3 ND hard grad combined with a 0.6 soft grad to hold back the sky. I was concerned that if I used too many hard grads, there would be too dark a transition line between the land and sky, especially since the horizon isn’t level and is broken by the chapel’s spire. After a challenging bike ride, followed by the making of this tricky image, I decided to reward myself with a delicious omelette from the café that was conveniently situated just behind my camera...
I try not to go a location with any strongly preconceived ideas about what I want to take, as the weather rarely co-operates to give you what you envisage – I just try to make the best of what I find. Being a geologist, I’ve been trained to take images of rocks like a scientist, so on this occasion I was challenged to combine my passion for geology with my love of photography and create images of rocks like an artist. This shot was an early attempt in that process.

I spotted the large boulder and its reflection, and decided to make this the main point of the image, using the rocks in the river as foreground and fitting a polarising filter to bring out more detail. I used a Big Stopper to clean up the reflection by smoothing out the effect of the ripples on the water. It was then a process of adjusting the two main elements in the frame before turning my attention to the riverbanks and the edges. I tend to shoot a little wider than is perhaps necessary, in order to give me more flexibility with cropping later. It can often be the little details right on the frame’s edge that trip you up.

Fortunately, the light was so dull on this occasion that the difference in light levels between the river, rocks and snow wasn’t an issue. It took several attempts for me to get the foreground right, focusing on different boulders, and getting closer and closer to the main rock outcrop. This meant that any snow that I’d trampled on – which would spoil the image – was behind me. Once you have moved forward, there’s no going back. If there were any difficulties with this shot, they were to do with working in deep snow, trying to stay upright and not dropping anything that might have disappeared without trace.
I used my camera’s live view function to frame the shot, then added a LEE ProGlass Filter to reduce the overall exposure (because it was very contrasty) and a 0.6 ND hard grad to reduce the flare from the sun.

After taking a test shot, I moved quickly to swap the 0.6 for an 0.9 ND grad, then waited for the clouds to pass in front of the sun. I took about six photographs over the next minute or so – and I had the shot. For me, it’s the light coming through the cloud that makes the image. If I hadn’t wandered to this spot at the time I did, I would have missed it completely, as half an hour later it started to rain, which turned the sky muddy and bland.

I’m a portrait photographer by trade, and I realised, after some quite dire attempts, that landscape photography requires a whole different skill set. With this in mind, I booked myself a place on a LEE Filters landscape workshop, in the hope of returning home with at least one good image that could be framed to go on our wall.

When I first set eyes on this scene, clouds were covering the sun and little rays were visible, which I thought made the location look like an African savannah (which is why I nicknamed the image the ‘Dorset savannah’). My intention with this image was simply to convey the light and peaceful nature of the scene. In order to achieve this,

Canon EOS 5D Mark III with Canon 24-70mm f/2.8L lens at 35mm, ISO 100, 1/30sec at f/11, 0.6 ND ProGlass filter, 0.9 ND hard grad
This shot was taken at Denbies Wine Estate in Surrey in 2013, as part of a prize I won in a competition. I didn't know what to expect at the location, as I had never been there before, but my plan was to shoot at sunrise. As the weather had indicated fog, I hoped to capture an atmospheric landscape that featured vines in the mist.

I have a routine when using my filters, which I've developed so that I don't forget anything. Once I find my spot and get the camera on my tripod with remote release and filter holder attached, I check my ISO and, if using the Big Stopper, set my white balance to 10,000K. I then frame my shot and cover the viewfinder to prevent any light leaks. After this, I turn on live view, check the horizon levels and then use the histogram to set the exposure correctly. Once that is done, I'm set. I choose my filters and, if necessary, adjust the exposure. It may sound a bit OCD, but it works for me. When I first started to use filters, I was stressed by all the things I had to remember, but after a few sessions I was smitten.

For this image, I followed my tried-and-tested routine, and this was the first shot out of the camera. What I love about this view is the mist that is rolling in from the left of the frame. It taught me that, the next time I shoot in fog, I will need to work a bit more quickly to ensure I get a few more shots in the bag. The sunrise happens quickly, changing the look of the scene, and you can never tell what will happen. Five minutes after I took this, a wall of white fog appeared and the view was no more.

We arrived at the spectacular Kimmeridge Bay on the Dorset coast in the early afternoon, with the aim of staying there until after the sun had set. This meant there was plenty of time and opportunity to capture a wide variety of photographs. The bay was beautiful and, at first, in the early afternoon, the conditions were very tranquil, with very little cloud in the sky. Then, as we went into the late afternoon and sunset, the tide came in rapidly and the atmosphere became much more moody.

This was my final shot of the day, when the water was starting to lap around the legs of my tripod. Having already taken several images of the wider view of the bay, both before and during sunset, I was keen to finish with a close-up detail image of the foreground. Looking down at the ground, I decided to try to capture the wet rocks that I had been standing on only minutes before as they glistened in the low, fading light.

There was quite a powerful tide, so a shutter speed of two minutes gave me the milky effect I was after. I love the picture's smoothness and coldness, and the fact that there are only two colours: blue and black. The end result is moody and even a little surreal, and seems to invite you to step off the rocks and into the unknown. The strong diagonal line from bottom left to top right gives some dynamism to what is otherwise a fairly quiet composition. Although this was the only image I took of this particular scene, fortunately everything came together at exactly the right time, and it was one to keep.
The picture shown here was taken during a workshop in 2013. While the broad topic of the workshop was ‘reflections’, I intended to take pictures that captured the true spirit of Venice – in other words, how the city might look without the incredible number of tourists. However, I certainly did not plan to take this picture in advance. It wasn’t until I discovered the statue of the disabled artist Alison Lapper in front of the church on the other side of the lagoon that the idea for it came to me.

For me, the photograph works because it reflects the ‘new Venice’ – a place that has become an important centre for the international modern art trade. I also figured that the statue would constitute an interesting contrast to the very traditional setting of the picture. The Big Stopper, of course, played a big part in creating the peaceful atmosphere. It is hard to imagine that I was surrounded by hundreds of people when I took the picture, and it was particularly challenging to find a place where nobody would step in front of my camera. Getting the exposure right was not difficult and, after a couple of test shots, I had the correct exposure. I should probably have done a better job in making sure that the poles didn’t block the view of the statue – but if nothing else, it gives me a good reason to return to Venice.

When going on a weekend photography workshop, in which the time for taking pictures is limited, you have to have some luck with the conditions and light. At 6am on the first morning, our group was ready and waiting on the shore of Lake Windermere, but the weather, which was grey and cloudy, let us down. Half an hour later, when it became clear that it wasn’t going to improve, we gave up.

However, the following morning, the light was wonderful, with a perfect sunrise and a touch of autumn mist in the background. There was hardly any wind and the visibility was good. In all, it was perfect for photography. I felt as if the boats on the lake made up a sort of still life, then, when the sun came up, some colour burst through in the sky and the clouds turned purple. I took this picture at the moment when the colours were beginning to fade, and tried to capture a moment of stillness. The light is balanced and the colours subtle, both of which are necessary to convey a sense of calm.
Canon EOS 50D with 24-105mm f/4 lens at 24mm, ISO 100, one second at f/13, 0.6 ND soft grad
HOW SHOULD I CLEAN MY LEE RESIN FILTERS?

LEE resin filters are made of an optical polycarbonate resin, and should be treated as you would a lens or a pair of spectacles. Clean with a lint-free microfibre cloth or, if necessary, a lens-cleaning solution – which is ideal for removing greasy fingerprints. Salt spray from the sea should be dissolved in warm water (not hot) and the filter dried and cleaned as usual.

MY BIG STOPPER HAS A BLUE COLOUR CAST – WHY IS THIS?

This is perfectly normal and is there for technical reasons. Without the blue cast, the filter would actually be less easy to correct to neutral. If you shoot in raw, then the cast is easily removed by manually increasing the colour temperature or just setting to auto white balance using the selective eye-dropper tool. Increasing the colour temperature to something like 10,000K (often the maximum on most cameras) at the shooting stage will go most of the way to correcting the cast.

HOW SHOULD I STORE LEE RESIN FILTERS?

Individual resin filters are supplied wrapped in tissue, in a soft Cordura pouch. The tissue can be discarded once opened and the filter can be stored and transported in the pouch for normal use. Resin filter sets are supplied in one of our three filter wraps – again, wrapped in tissue when new. These wraps are designed to take up minimum space in your camera bag, but don’t offer much protection against physical damage. If your filters are to be stored for long periods without use, we recommend keeping them in a cool, dry place, in one of our ten-filter multi-pouches.

STUMPED BY YOUR FILTERS? WE’RE HERE TO HELP…

Before cast correction

After cast correction
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LINEAR AND A CIRCULAR POLARISER?

There is no difference in the effect on the final image. The difference is in the way in which the filter manages the light at wavelength level.

Linear polarisers provide standard polarised light, with all light waves vibrating in the same plane, whereas circular polarisers will polarise and then spin the light waves.

The internal optics that control focusing or metering in some modern cameras cannot work with standard polarised light, and therefore a circular polariser is required. Your camera’s instruction book will usually tell you which type of polariser you need, but if in doubt, a circular polariser, although more expensive, is suitable for all types of camera.

IS MY BIG STOPPER FAULTY?

We have received a number of complaints about certain Big Stoppers being faulty, causing light leaks and strange magenta colour casts on the image. In each case so far, the cause has been user error. First and foremost, the viewfinder must be covered during long exposures on both film and digital cameras. If left uncovered, light will find its way to the sensor, causing the flare and magenta cast that appear to indicate a faulty filter.

The filter must always be placed in the rearmost filter slot, with the foam forming a seal with the filter holder. It must also be used in a LEE filter holder – other makes of holder appear unable to ensure a light-leak-free seal.

Finally, the viewfinder should be covered during all long exposures, regardless of the levels of ambient light.

HOW WIDE WILL THE LEE FILTER SYSTEM GO BEFORE VIGNETTING OCCURS?

There is no hard and fast answer to this. Lens specifications and designs change all the time, as do the filter holder requirements. However, as a rough guide, using a simple holder set-up with two filter slots and no lens shade, you can go as wide as 10mm with a small-chip DSLR. The chart (right) will give you a guide to the widest lens that can be used with filters on the various camera formats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camera format</th>
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<td>35mm and full-chip DSLR</td>
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<td>6x4.5cm and 6x6cm</td>
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Despite having lived in Yorkshire for many years, it was the first time photographer Mark Denton had seen the area’s iconic white horse from this particular spot. At the time, he was looking for material for his new range of greetings cards, and this provided the view he was after.

There was a great deal of cloud, which was moving very quickly, thanks to the strong winds, and the sun was behind him and at a slight angle. The scene is rather a flat one, and was made even flatter by the use of a short telephoto lens, so Denton had to wait for the right balance of light and shadow to give the scene depth.

“I chose this image from the 20 or so I shot, because of the swathe of dark cloud. Some images featured a lot of blue sky, but when I looked at them on screen, I felt it detracted from the scene,” he explains.

Denton had to wait for some time before the sun lit up the horse. The other elements in the composition meant he had to keep it quite central in the frame. A 0.6 ND hard grad over the sky stops the brightest areas burning out, while an 81C warm-up filter balances out the cold blue cast.

Denton admits that, in an ideal world, the house wouldn’t be there – but also says that it’s rare to find perfection in landscape photography.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER
Mark Denton is a professional photographer who lives close to the Yorkshire Dales National Park – an area that provides most of his photographic inspiration. He has worked solely in the panoramic format since 2003, enjoying the challenge of composing in the letterbox shape. He concentrates in particular on ensuring that his compositions feature plenty of lead-in lines coming in from the edges of the frame, directing the viewer’s eye towards the central areas of the image. He shoots with a Horseman camera with a digital back, shooting two frames of each scene and stitching them together later in Photoshop.

Visit markdentonphotographic.co.uk
It was a January morning when the sound of foghorns woke Lynne Douglas. She opened her curtains to see a lilac light on the horizon glowing through thick, purple fog. Knowing it wouldn't last long, she hurried to her favourite spot, aiming to emphasise the transitions from dark to light in the sky and planning to use a long shutter speed to soften the movement of the water.

It is the restricted colour palette that gives this image its strength: the soft but dense purple contrasts with the twinkling orange street lights of the town of Gourock. “I wanted to emphasise the smallness of the houses,” Douglas explains, “making them appear as if they were part of a stage set just as the curtain lifts.”

She chose to follow the conventions of composition, placing the town hall, with its spire, on the intersection of the thirds, with the horizon towards the lower part of the frame. As is so often the case, the light lasted only a few minutes before becoming a pale, watery winter dawn.

The 0.6 ND hard grad stacked on top of a 0.9 ND filter ensures a long enough exposure to get a smooth colour gradient.

Canon EOS 5D Mark II with 24-105mm lens at 105mm, ISO 100, 15 seconds at f/8, 0.9 ND filter and 0.6 ND hard grad

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Lynne Douglas describes herself as always having been a bit of a dreamer. As a child, she drew constantly, and even now she is still inspired by painters such as Degas and Monet. Several years ago, she discovered the joys of low-light photography, and has since made it her signature style – even moving to the west coast of Scotland, where the light can be moody, dramatic, soft and sensual, all within the space of a few minutes – to pursue the passion. She almost always crops her photographs to a square, saying she sees them like sections in a patchwork quilt, and is concentrating on building a portfolio of images in which colour and movement are the main themes.

Visit crionnaphotography.com
This magical river is a place that photographer David West has visited on numerous occasions over the years. As someone who lives in the spectacular Zion Canyon, he is always inspired to find new images of the park, and on this particular occasion it was his intention to capture the essence of the autumn leaves as they were at their peak alongside this small section of the 162-mile-long Virgin River. Before making the image, West visited the spot several times at different times of day and studied the compositional possibilities from a variety of angles. “I wanted anyone who viewed it to feel as if they were being pulled by the flow of the river into the centre of the image,” he explains.

Because he wanted to use a long exposure, West had to wait until there wasn’t a breath of wind. The still conditions meant there was no movement in the leaves, and helped to define the detail in the sandstone and trees.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

David West grew up in New Jersey, but now lives in Zion Canyon – one of the most impressive regions of the American West – so he is never short of inspiration. The majesty and drama of the landscape has influenced generations of photographers, and it was West’s love of the outdoors that first brought him to the region. Now, he can be found photographing in all seasons, waiting for the perfect moment when light and composition come together. He is passionate about conveying not only the magic of nature through his photography, but also the importance of preserving our natural world. His work can be seen at his gallery in Springdale, Utah.

Visit davidjwest.com

Linhof Technorama 617a W with Schneider 72mm f/5.6 Super Angulon lens, Fuji Velvia 100, more than 15 seconds at f/32, 0.3 ND soft grad and Polariser

A polarising filter helped cut through the glare on the water’s surface and increased the saturation of the colours throughout the scene.

A shutter speed of more than 15 seconds conveys a sense of movement, while the bright highlights break up the darkness of the water.

A 0.3 ND soft grad across the top of the frame helped to darken the canyon wall.

Knowing there would be some light fall-off at the edges of the film, West set up the composition to make the most of the dark area of rock on the right-hand side.

Not only do the foreground rocks anchor the composition, they also balance out the sandstone ‘wall’ in the background. Both had to be exposed carefully so as not to lose any detail.

A shutter speed of more than 15 seconds conveys a sense of movement, while the bright highlights break up the darkness of the water.

Small details can be as important as the bigger picture. The leaves on this rock echo those on the trees that line the river and help tie the image together.

The red of the sandstone complements the orange hue of the leaves.

Lincoln Technorama 617a W with Schneider 72mm f/5.6 Super Angulon lens, Fuji Velvia 100, more than 15 seconds at f/32, 0.3 ND soft grad and Polariser

The red of the sandstone complements the orange hue of the leaves.
What inspires you to photograph in cities?
Craig Roberts
I’ve always loved taking pictures in towns and cities. I think it’s because of the sheer variety of images that you can capture within a relatively compact area – there are almost endless possibilities for photography. Unlike when you’re in the countryside, in cities you can walk between locations or hop on public transport to get you to your next spot. I love both old and new architecture equally, and also enjoy seeking out images that many people don’t spot – the smaller views within a bigger scene, or the abstract aspects of a building, for example. In particular, I love London, and have done since I was a teenager. I go back there several times a year, and always find somewhere new to explore, but I also like photographing in Leeds, Newcastle and, lately, the new buildings at Salford Quays near Manchester.

What sort of stories do you try to tell?
Craig Roberts
I guess I’m simply trying to show people the city I’m in, from my point of view. I like to reflect both the hustle and bustle and also the relative calm of the city early in the morning. Then there are the abstract views and the sheer beauty of the locations. Cities are man made, yet in my eyes they are just as beautiful as the countryside. I only include people in my images when it’s absolutely necessary, either to convey a sense of scale or to aid the composition, for example. A longer exposure, >>
in which the figure is blurred, not only creates sense of movement, but also means you can sell the image without the need for a model release – something that is necessary if the person can be identified in the image.

**LF**

How do you manage to convey the busy nature of cities without the composition becoming confused?

**CR**

Timing plays a crucial part in this. If you want to include people and traffic in your shots, there are times and places where this can be conveyed without them completely overwhelming the picture. I regularly stand for hours in one spot, with my camera ready and set up on its tripod, waiting for the right light or for the crowds to disperse – or both. If I want to capture, say, just one bus or taxi in the shot, I will be patient and wait for the right one to appear. You have to learn to ignore people around you, as you can become the centre of attention when you’re standing in a busy street, with your camera on a tripod, waiting for the perfect moment to fire the shutter.

**LF**

What do you feel is the best time of day to shoot in the city?

**CR**

Most big cities are alive for 24 hours a day. Yes, of course, mornings and evenings are the times when you get the best light, just like in the landscape, but there are pictures to be had throughout the day, whatever the weather. And of course, if you find yourself in a city at midday in the height of summer, or when it’s absolutely pouring with rain, you have the advantage of being able to shoot indoors in some buildings. If I come home with even one really good shot from a trip to the city, I’m happy. Success is dictated by not only the weather, but whether building work is taking place. I return to the same places every few months and am prepared to wait years if necessary for the right shot.

**LF**

What equipment do you use?

**CR**

I have a Canon EOS 5D Mark II as my main camera. This, with a 24mm shift lens, is my first choice for capturing architecture and cityscapes. More recently, however, I have been using the Olympus OM-D, a lightweight, mirror-less camera, which I use handheld, and that has great advantages in the city. I shoot with prime lenses with this camera, despite the convenience of a zoom, and the 14mm and 20mm seem to be my most used lenses (28mm and 40mm equivalent in 35mm terms). The 20mm is a great walkabout lens for street photography, which I also enjoy when not shooting the city itself.

I carry a Manfrotto 190 tripod and use it with a ball head, and I partner the Olympus OM-D with the LEE Filters Seven5 system. This smaller system is ideal for the smaller mirror-less cameras such as the OM-D.
Graffiti, Shoreditch

After some cool graffiti for my urban shots, I headed for the Shoreditch area of London, and this side road provided just the piece of artwork I was after. I then waited for a passing bus to add context and colour.

Olympus OM-D with 14mm lens, ISO 400, 1/15sec at f/8, 0.9 ND split grad
or Fuji X series. With this, I use the polariser, ND grads, both hard and soft (the softs are particularly useful when shooting skyscrapers that interrupt the horizon) and the Big Stopper. The Seven5 system suits the smaller lenses of Compact System Cameras – which is ideal for me, as I don’t want to be carrying a massive bag when walking around city all day.

LF

If you had to choose just one filter, which would it be?

CR

As mentioned previously, the 0.9 ND soft grad is great for shooting when a building encroaches on the sky, so this is one I use a lot. But then the Big Stopper is wonderful for my ‘fine art’ images of the city, where I can blur the sky and any water in the shot. This filter is also ideal for ‘removing’ people, thanks to the long exposure. Can I choose two?!

LF

Have you ever encountered difficulties with access?

CR

Yes, all the time. Security guards are the bane of the city photographer’s life. It’s a hazard of the job. You can see them approaching from the corner of your eye and you think to yourself, “Here we go!” However, I’m always polite to them and explain that I know my rights if I am on public land. Most are just inquisitive, and some are making sure you aren’t filming the entrances to the building. Others, however, you have to be >>

Canary Wharf sunset

I’d hoped for a colourful sky as a backdrop to this pre-planned shot – and I got just what I wished for. This fantastic urban view called for a long exposure. Wonderful lead-in lines add to the drama and a two-stop neutral-density grad keeps the contrast under control.

Olympus OMD with 14mm lens, ISO 200, two seconds at f/8, 0.6 ND soft grad, tripod

West India Docks

Overcast conditions and a strong breeze meant I had to rethink how to shoot this scene. I decided to embrace the conditions and choose filters that would enhance them. I didn’t correct for the slight blue colour cast of the Big Stopper, as I felt this added to the steely appearance of the buildings.

Olympus OMD with 14mm lens, ISO 200, 46 seconds at f/11, 0.9 ND soft grad and Big Stopper, tripod
**Selfridges, Birmingham**

This is one of my favourite buildings in the UK and is the perfect subject to illustrate the effect of a polarising filter. Abstract shapes, strong lines and a vibrant but neutral backdrop are all vital factors that help to make this an image with impact.

**Olympus OMD with 20mm lens, ISO 200, 1/250sec at f/8, Polariser**

**Battersea Power Station, London**

I love this view of the disused power station from the approach to Victoria train station. The shape and movement of the track and trains adds impact to the view beyond, while the black-and-white conversion adds to the gritty, urban atmosphere. An ND grad helped retain definition in the dull cloud and prevent it burning out. The Big Stopper prolonged the exposure to blur the trains’ approach along the junction.

**Olympus OMD with 30mm lens, ISO 640, 1.6 seconds at f/4, 0.6 ND hard grad and Big Stopper, tripod**
Packed with stunning imagery, *Inspiring Professionals* and *Inspiring Professionals 2* demonstrate how some of the UK’s finest photographers use filters to convey their vision. While *Inspiring Professionals* is divided into chapters covering filter types, *Inspiring Professionals 2* covers subjects as diverse as travel, snow and hand-held photography. Going far beyond mere technique, both books feature informative diagrams and detailed accounts of the making of each image.

Photographers include Joe Cornish, Mark Denton, Paul Gallagher, John Gravett, Tom Mackie, David Noton, Charlie Waite, Jeremy Walker and David Ward.

Both books are available to purchase from LEE Filters dealers or direct from LEE Filters. For further details call LEE Filters on +44 (0) 1264 366245 or email sales@leefilters.com.