Welcome

It was once said that in order to be a good photographer, it’s vital to have a passion for something other than photography. It makes perfect sense. After all, if you’re not fascinated by a particular thing – be that mountains, horses, butterflies, light or colour, say – then what are you going to take pictures of? For Rachael Talibart, it’s the sea. It always was – after all, she spent most of her childhood on it – but it took a while for her subconscious to bring it to the fore. Once she’d had the epiphany, however, nothing was going to stop her. She’s now known for her hugely influential (and widely copied) series Sirens, in which she captured ‘faces’ in the wildest of waves. On page 6, she discusses how the series came about, and where she’s moving to now, creatively speaking.

Talking of moving on, the news that LEE Filters has launched a new holder for its 100mm system won’t have passed many keen photographers by. The LEE100 filter holder is not only made of a stronger, lighter material, but also now comes with three filter-guide blocks, of one, two or three slots, which easily clip on and snap off the holder. Most importantly, it now features a locking ring that allows three different options in terms of rotation and securing the holder to the adaptor ring. Find out more about the system, and how highly the pros rate it, on page 20.

No season seems to get a photographer’s creative juices flowing the way autumn does. It’s not all about the colour (although that plays a huge part, of course); there’s something about the raking light as the sun stays lower in the sky, and the anticipation of atmospheric wisps of mist or a sprinkling of frost, that’s guaranteed to please the landscape photographer. On page 56, we ask three photographers about their very different approaches to capturing this most photogenic time of year.

Elsewhere, Mark Cornick discusses his love of Intentional Camera Movement (page 74), Verity Milligan reveals how she uncovered the more photogenic side of the city of Birmingham (page 28), while Pete Bridgwood offers his critique of a selection of images in YourView (page 68).

We hope you find the issue inspiring. Keep shooting!

Contributors

> Paul Ashby Johnson
> Mark Bauer
> Pete Bridgwood
> Matthew Cattell
> Mark Cornick
> Joe Cornish
> Dave Cullen
> Lynne Douglas
> Andy Farrer
> Mark Gilligan
> Colin Jarvis
> Andrew Marr
> Verity Milligan
> David Noton
> Philipp Pley
> Mike Prince
> Craig Roberts
> Lizzie Shepherd
> Rachael Talibart
> Jeremy Walker

While visiting a local arboretum, I came across a small cluster of acers. Gorgeous morning light was raking across this naked branch. At the same time a second acer, still with its leaves, was also lit in the distance. Using a telephoto lens, I worked on a simple composition that overlaid the two trees, and selected a wide aperture of f/2.8 to render the distant leaves as beautiful scarlet bokeh. A landscape polariser reduced the surface reflection of the distant leaves and enhanced their colour. The new LEE100 hood prevented any stray light from entering the lens and reducing contrast or causing flare.

Nikon D850 with Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8 at 145mm,
1/640sec at f/2.8, ISO100, LEE100 polariser, LEE100 hood
Photograph by Matthew Cattell
ON THE CREST OF A WAVE

As a child, Rachael Talibart spent almost as much time at sea as she did on dry land. No surprise, then, that its moods and vagaries came to dominate her photography in later life. She tells us her story.

HOLD TIGHT

The 100mm filter holder has always been fundamental to the LEE Filters system. When the time came to relaunch it, there were a number of developments that would be crucial to its success. We reveal everything that’s new about the LEE100 holder.

COMPOSITION MASTERCLASS

The city of Birmingham is not somewhere that’s renowned for its beauty. Photographer Verity Milligan explains how she set out to change people’s perceptions of it.

THE GALLERY

Feast your eyes on our showcase of fine photography, all shot using LEE Filters.

ANATOMY OF AN AUTUMN IMAGE

Autumn is often the landscape photographer’s favourite season, for obvious reasons. Three professionals explain how they go about making the most of this photogenic time of year.

THE KNOWLEDGE

Get the best out of your filters with these tips from the pros.

YOURVIEW

Each month, on our website, a different professional photographer critiques a range of images submitted by LEE Filters’ users. Here, it’s the turn of Pete Bridgwood. To see more images from YourView, visit leefilters.com.

SOFTLY DOES IT

In recent years, front-to-back sharpness has taken a back seat for many landscape photographers, with deliberately blurred, handheld long exposures becoming more popular. Mark Cornick explains why this approach matches his vision of the world.
On the crest of a wave

AS A CHILD, RACHAEL TALIBART SPENT ALMOST AS MUCH TIME AT SEA AS SHE DID ON DRY LAND. NO SURPRISE, THEN, THAT ITS MOODS AND VAGARIES CAME TO DOMINATE HER PHOTOGRAPHY IN LATER LIFE. SHE TELLS US HER STORY

Until her early teens, Rachael Talibart spent more of her life on the water than she did on dry land. At least, it felt like it at the time. With a father who was a passionate sailor, any spare moments saw the Bognor Regis-based family packed on to its yacht, with trips to Cornwall, the canals of Holland or the French coast the norm for the first 12 or 13 years of Rachael’s life. There are photographs in the family albums of her as a small child, in charge of the tiller and plotting a compass course on their journeys. However, it wasn’t always as idyllic as it might first appear, because seasickness was pretty much her constant companion, and this meant she was forced to spend most of those long sea crossings on deck, staring at the waves surrounding her. “Kids are imaginative and I was no different,” she says. “I would watch these waves and they’d look like mountainscapes, or I’d see creatures in them.”

For those who know Rachael’s images, the path from those childhood experiences to Sirens, her body of photographic work in which crashing waves are named after mythological creatures, would appear to be a direct one. The reality is different, however, because at 17 years old, an age at which “we are much too young to make sensible decisions”, she decided she would ditch the English literature she loved and study law instead. “I thought I needed to go out, make money, do something vocational and make a difference,” she says. “So I did it for all the wrong reasons, really.”
After graduating, she ended up in commercial litigation, working for one of the City of London’s ‘Magic Circle’ law firms for more than 15 years, before moving sideways to a different firm to train newly qualified litigators. During this time, however, her passion for photography was growing. On her honeymoon to Zimbabwe with husband Peter, who worked for the same law firm, she shot 51 rolls of 36-exposure film, showing the results to anyone “unaware enough to get themselves trapped into looking”.

Eventually, Rachael walked away from her career in law and turned not to photography, but English literature, doing a BA and then an MA in the subject she “should have done in the first place”. This happened over a 10-year period, bringing up her son and daughter at the same time. Then, as part of her studies, she had the opportunity to take an additional course, so she picked a three-month introduction to digital photography. “I became completely addicted,” she reveals. “Absolutely obsessed. And that hasn’t changed.”

At this point, she found herself at something of a crossroads, because her plan all along had been to go on to do a PhD, yet photography was exerting its force more and more powerfully. She had been picking up a certain amount of commercial work locally in Surrey, but it was when she went on a photography course in Venice five years ago with Canadian photographer Michael Levin and British photographer Jonathan Chritchley that things came to a head. “I had been fully intending to do the PhD and become an academic,” she recalls, “but something changed.”

The last morning of the workshop in Venice was a foggy one, so Rachael took herself off on her own to a corner of the city. “I made a picture that isn’t really about Venice at all,” she explains. “It was just before sunrise, and was completely still, with the fog softening everything. I just stood in the silence and suddenly thought, I’m not going to do the PhD. I’m going to see if I am good enough to make it as a fine-art photographer selling through the gallery market.”

Investing in the future

She returned to the hotel where the group was staying, sought Jonathan out, and asked if he would mentor her. “It was a huge investment,” she reveals, “because his mentoring is expensive. But when it comes to something like this, you don’t pick the person who’s free, you pick the person who’s right.” She describes it as the best money she’s ever spent.

The process was aided by the fact that she had a very clear goal from the off. “I wanted to be the best...”
photographer I could be,” she says, “and if that was good enough to get into the fine-art market, then that’s what I wanted to do.”

The first thing to understand was that she’d have to kiss goodbye to the macro images of bees and the like. Laughing, she says, “Funnily enough, people don’t tend to want close-ups of insects on their walls!”

But it was Jonathan who helped her realise that she should be – and probably should always have been – a photographer of the sea. One of the earliest things he asked her to do was to describe being in a place completely alone, but also completely content and at peace. She recalls, “I described sitting on a shore. On one side was a sandy beach and on the other were rocks with waves breaking on them. He told me that if I’d described sitting at the top of the Gherkin sipping a cocktail, he’d have suggested I needed to be a photographer of architecture, but I didn’t. He then asked me why I was taking photographs of insects when I loved the sea so much. It should have been blindingly obvious, but we don’t always know ourselves. And he was right, because as soon as he said it, I willingly accepted it, and I’ve pretty well avoided anything non-coastal since.”

This exchange meant Rachael was at last well on her way to finding her photographic ‘voice’. It’s something she’s regularly asked about now, on her workshops. 

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Nyx: goddess of the night. One of the primordial gods who emerged at the beginning of creation, Nyx was usually imagined as the very substance of the night – a curtain of darkness drawn across the sky.

Sedna: an Inuit goddess of the sea. Many different versions of her story exist, but in all of them she loses her fingers while clinging to a boat, and the fingers become the creatures of the sea.
and when she gives talks. While acknowledging that many photographers will have different answers to such a question, for her, it’s "quite mundane", as she puts it. "It’s about going back to the same place, over and over again. If I go somewhere new, I almost never bring back portfolio shots on the first occasion, because at those times I’m a photography tourist and am going to shoot all the clichés. But if you go back to a place numerous times, you’re in a position to try the crazy ideas and experiments."

It was this dogged determination to dig beneath the surface that resulted in Sirens – the body of work for which she is best known. In it, the viewer is led into a world of mythical sea creatures depicted by crashing waves. And while the majority of the images that make up the series were shot on one afternoon off the coast of Newhaven, in East Sussex, they were in reality the culmination of many hours of travel and – as Rachael herself would happily admit – many ditched images that worked through the clichés.

It’s no secret that Newhaven is a particularly good location for big waves, thanks to its steeply stepped shingle beach. But most photographers, Rachael included, who have photographed it during storms, have included the quay and lighthouse with waves crashing over them. None of those images exist on Rachael’s hard drive any more, having all now been culled. But while she was making them, she knew she was searching for something different, so throughout the winter of 2015 and into 2016, she made almost weekly visits to the location. All the while, it would appear her subconscious was taking her back to her childhood, hand on the tiller of her father’s sailing yacht, as she stared at the creatures being created by the sea’s waves, because it was on one of these visits that she made the breakthrough she’d been looking for. "It was January 2016, and I was on the beach at Newhaven again," she recalls. "I made all the usual naff pictures, but for one moment the sun broke through the clouds briefly, and I took a picture. It was just this isolated wave against the sea..."
the sky – no cliff, no quay, no lighthouse, no context. And the wave looked as if it had a personality. When I saw it, I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I was going to photograph waves with character, and I was going to name them after mythological beings.”

Once she had the idea, it was a question of waiting. Fortunately, she wasn’t hanging around too long, because only two weeks later, in February 2016, Storm Imogen arrived. “Everything came together,” Rachael explains. “The wind direction was right, the wind speed was right, it was the top of the biggest spring tide of that part of the year, and there was light. I was down on that beach for the best six hours ever. It was fabulous.”

On a high

Nearly four years on from that pivotal day, in which she made 3,000 exposures, Rachael can still recall the sheer exhilaration she felt at the time. “I would say, looking back, that I was on a high emotionally in every respect for about a year and a half after that,” she reveals. “It was a fantastic period where everything seemed to come together. It was partly because I was making the pictures I was always meant to make, but actually it was probably also because I was so happy from this experience.”

Selected images from the work went on to be recognised in the Sony World Photography Awards, as well as the Black + White Photographer of the Year and Landscape Photographer of the Year competitions, and she hasn’t looked back since. Her work has been exhibited at several galleries, including one in the US, where she recently sold a one-metre print of her image ‘Poseidon Rising’ for $9,000.

However, there is one question that has to be raised. There’s no doubting the success of Sirens, and equally, there is no doubting how grateful Rachael is for the launchpad it has given her. But she has also had a taste of what it is like >>
Clearing fog: Rachael has photographed Beachy Head Lighthouse many times from both the top and bottom of the cliffs, but this is her favourite. The drifting fog cleared briefly, allowing her to make a handful of exposures. This was the only one with a flock of birds passing by.

Canon EOS 5DS R with EF70-200mm f/4L IS USM at 70mm, 30 seconds at f/13, ISO 100, 0.9 ND soft grad, polariser, Big Stopper

White cliffs: Always looking for something different, Rachael created this unusual composition of the famous Seven Sisters cliffs. There have been many copies since, but this was the original.

Rock Study I: Rachael found this little scene on an obscure beach at low tide. How many faces can you see in the rocks?

Fujifilm X-T2 with XF18-55mm f/2.8-4 R LM OIS at 35mm, 1/40sec at f/8, ISO 400

Gleaning fog: Rachael has photographed Beachy Head Lighthouse many times from both the top and bottom of the cliffs, but this is her favourite. The drifting fog cleared briefly, allowing her to make a handful of exposures. This was the only one with a flock of birds passing by.

Canon EOS 5DS R with EF35-70mm f/4L IS USM at 70mm, 1/250sec at f/10, ISO 100

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Fujifilm X-T2 with XF18-55mm f/2.8-4 R LM OIS at 35mm, 1/40sec at f/8, ISO 400

without acknowledging their influences. That, I’m going to be honest, is bloody annoying, and I can’t pretend it isn’t.”

She goes on to cite the photographer who, while not copying her images, attended one of Rachael’s talks, then lifted entire sections of it, word for word, and used them in an article under their own name. “There’s a reason why at university everyone has to sign a plagiarism declaration, and plagiarism is something I would be horrified to think I’d committed. However, you can’t get too hung up on it, and on the softer side of that, it’s how art develops.”

Which raises the question, following the extraordinary success of Sirens, where does Rachael take her work next? “I’m moving in the direction of being completely immersed in the sea, rather than showing a wave with personality,” she says, indicating an image she shot in Nazaré, Portugal, which some may know as the site of the biggest wave ever to be surfed. And, in 2020, the Bosham Gallery in West Sussex will host a solo exhibition of her work that will be completely Siren-free. “This is really good news for me,” she says, “because Sirens will sell out. It won’t last forever and I don’t want to keep bashing out more and more of it. I need to move on. I’d like to come up with a new portfolio that captures people’s imaginations in the way Sirens did, but I’m also aware there’s a possibility I never will – and I am at peace with that. In life, we have to be careful to celebrate what we’ve achieved rather than constantly thinking about the next thing.”

Making a space to take stock of her achievements is something Rachael seems pretty good at. She cites the current trend for exploring ‘mindful’ photography, but points out that photography is, by its very nature, “the most mindful thing you can do”. She continues, “You forget you’re hungry, you forget to pee – you forget everything.”

She even manages, when out with her camera, to forget the chronic back pain that has dogged her for many years, >>
Rhino Rock: Rachael visits the Oregon coast regularly and this is one of her favourite rocks. It reminds her of a rhino and for which she had CBT in order to help her cope. "Photographers are often accused of not fully experiencing the world, because we see it through a viewfinder," she says, "but I believe we experience it more fully than others, because we are massively observant. Spending time in the company of the sea is really important in terms of making me a human being. When I stand there on the beach, the sea makes me feel completely insignificant. It's this great, unknowable thing, it would crush me, and it wouldn't care. Having an additional hundred followers on Instagram or having someone plagiarise me - that's all so unimportant by comparison."

It would seem all those hours of nausea throughout her childhood were worth it.

Visit rachaeltalibart.com. For details about Rachael's workshops, visit f11workshops.com
THE 100MM FILTER HOLDER HAS ALWAYS BEEN FUNDAMENTAL TO THE LEE FILTERS SYSTEM. WHEN THE TIME CAME TO RELAUNCH IT, THERE WERE A NUMBER OF DEVELOPMENTS THAT WOULD BE CRUCIAL TO ITS SUCCESS. WE REVEAL EVERYTHING THAT'S NEW ABOUT THE LEE100 HOLDER

When LEE Filters decided it was time to launch a new holder for its 100mm system, that was just the beginning. To completely relaunch such a popular, well-loved – not to mention vital – accessory takes time if it’s to be done right. In this case, however, it was worth it.

The choice of material was important. It had to be lightweight but incredibly sturdy and hardwearing at the same time. Research told us >>
that an injection-moulded polycarbonate compound was the way to achieve these two crucial elements. Creating a mould isn’t straightforward. It requires absolute precision, and while it’s possible to adjust the mould by ‘shaving’ it, if you go too far, you can’t take a step back again. So any alterations were made incrementally, checking and double-checking each time before moving on to the next step.

Running a very close second to all-round rigidity was functionality – and this is where the LEE100 holder excels. Fundamental to the new holder is an innocuous-looking spring release on its side. With a ridged surface that makes it easier to handle, the spring release is pulled to allow the holder to snap on to the adapter ring in a way that will already be familiar to LEE Filters users. But there’s more to it than that. It also features a blue locking ring that allows the holder to be used in three different ways. In its ‘neutral’ position, the ring simply allows the holder to be attached to the adapter ring and fully rotated. It also means that the holder can be removed quickly when required.

With the blue locking ring in its half-lock setting, this leaves the holder in a position where it can be rotated but not removed, as it is now locked firmly to the adapter ring. The ability to lock the holder level is useful when shooting hand-held with an ND grad. I can remember several situations when I’ve been shooting away only to realise that my grad’s gone wonky. That’s now an irritation of the past.

I’ve been working with the LEE100 holder since its launch in March 2019, which is enough time to know it’s a well put-together piece of kit that’s going to last. There wasn’t really much wrong with its predecessor, but the new one does offer some clear advantages. Having the option of locking it into place is obviously a good thing, as is the ease with which you can change the number of slots. However, for me, the main benefit is how easy it is to attach and remove the polariser. As a result, I find I’m actually using my polariser more often – attaching one to the original holder was sometimes a bit tricky, especially with cold hands or when wearing gloves, and so I wouldn’t always bother. I really like the design of the new filter, too, with its crenellated edges making it so much easier to rotate than a standard slim polariser.
Overall, the new LEE100 filter holder looks and feels like a more refined product. It’s beautifully light and simple, with no unnecessary over-engineered features. The biggest benefit is the way in which the polarising filter attaches and detaches; this is so much quicker and simpler to use, particularly when you have cold fingers.

The other welcome new feature is the ability to lock the holder on to the lens adaptor. This is particularly reassuring when photographing scenes such as this. My position on the rocks was somewhat precarious and it was reassuring to know that a clumsy moment could not result in me knocking the filters off the lens.

For me, there are three major advances with the LEE100 system. Firstly, the way in which the polariser now clips effortlessly to the front of the holder without any need for an additional front adaptor ring works beautifully. Secondly, you can now change between one, two and three slots without the need to unscrew the four retaining screws and fumble around with loads of loose guide rails. As with the polariser, this is a boon when you need to make a quick change on location.

The third major alteration is the spring-loaded retaining knob. Although now made of plastic, it is now lockable, which enables the holder and filters to be secured at an angle. If you need to make adjustments, turning the small locking lever allows for easy adjustments. All in all, the new LEE100 holder is a big improvement and it goes without saying that all the filters are useable on the new holder as well as the old.

Lizzie Shepherd

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Sony A7R Mark II with Sony FE 24-105mm f/4 lens at 24mm, 30 seconds at f/14, ISO 100, 1.8 ProGlass IRND, 0.6 ND very hard grad

Nikon D810 with Zeiss 35mm f/2, eight seconds at f/11, ISO 64, 0.6 ND medium grad, polariser

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Sony A7R Mark II with Sony FE 24-105mm f/4 lens at 24mm, 30 seconds at f/14, ISO 100, 1.8 ProGlass IRND, 0.6 ND very hard grad
The original 100mm holder was a design classic. Having used them for nearly 30 years, I had no complaints… almost. Occasionally, the brass plunger twiddly bit would unscrew, catching out the unwary. The guide rails were fiddly to attach, and the uninitiated had the opportunity to assemble them in the wrong screw holes, leading to scratched filters. The holder was not lockable, either on the adaptor ring, or in rotational position. The 105mm polariser was a pain to attach. And it all looked a bit… 1980s plastic fantastic. Yet overall, it worked great.

Now, every single one of those shortcomings has been solved. The new version even comes in a (surprisingly handsome) carbon-fibre style finish. But the essence of using filters, to get as close to the feel and mood of the final image, in camera, remains the same. In short, it’s the same but better.

Huge luminance range remains a headache in landscape photography so it’s great to be able to solve 90% of that in camera, as with the image above. The polariser darkens the water somewhat (but doesn’t affect the sky, with the sun mostly behind me). The 0.9 ND soft grad covers the entire sky and much of the distant landscape, helping balance the rear rise of the technical camera (which darkens the foreground). The 0.6 ND medium grad feathers down the sky further, ensuring there’s no clipping of the highlights.

Joe Cornish

Mark Gilligan

“If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,” so the old adage goes. While I wholeheartedly agree, who am I to stand in the way of progress? When I heard that the faithful old LEE Filters holder was going to be replaced, I wondered how they could make it better. I needn’t have worried. As soon as I received mine, I was astounded at how you could improve perfection! It is so intuitive to work with, not to mention tactile. Being able to lock and rotate while the holder is on camera is a great feature, and the flexibility of having one, two or three slots is so easy to reconfigure, even in the field.
Verity Milligan first picked up a stills camera just over 10 years ago. At the time, she was working as a technician and filmmaker, but it was a trip around Europe with a Nikon D40 that opened her eyes to the enjoyment of stills imagery. “It was fun, and a lot more immediate than movies, so it went from there,” she says. “I like to be outdoors, so it made sense to start taking a camera with me.”

Things took an interesting turn when, in 2012, she moved to Birmingham. “I wasn’t particularly pleased, as I’m not a city girl,” she says. “I couldn’t drive at the time – I felt trapped in Birmingham and it was getting me down, so I started to explore.”

Living half a mile from the Grand Union Canal, Verity would head there and follow it into the city centre, and soon started to treat it in the same way as if she were in a more rural setting, going out during the golden hour and seeing what she could make of it.

“Poor Brum doesn’t get a lot of love,” she laughs. “It does have a history of being bulldozed over and starting again. Maybe because people who live here hadn’t seen it in the way I photographed it before, my pictures started to get a lot of attention from the local community. It ended up with the Daily Mail running an article, and that catapulted me into a different league.”

In terms of composition, Verity says she has “definitely improved. Some people pick up a camera and intuitively know how to make everything work. I’m not like that.”

Like many, she started out favouring a very wideangle approach. “I’d stick as much as possible in the frame without really considering it properly,” she recalls. “But as I developed, I realised I liked engaging with different lenses and focal lengths, and I find myself composing all the time, even if I don’t have a camera in front of me.”

If she has one hint to offer, it’s to use your smartphone as a compositional aid. “I find it really useful and freeing,” she says. “I use it to start framing my shots without having to take all my camera gear out.”

Now that she’s started to establish herself, how does she feel about the city that ‘trapped’ her at first? “How I photograph Birmingham has evolved,” she explains, “but it will always be really special to me now. You can’t move for photographers these days, and it’s great to think that somehow I might have helped inspire a new generation to see it differently.”
Brindley Place Reflection

“This was one of those times when you go out planning to take one image, and come back with something completely different,” Verity says. She’d been out and about with her camera all morning, but the clear, cloudless conditions meant she had hardly taken any images. “I’d parked near this water feature, and it caught my eye.”

Inspired by the work of photographer Mike Curry, who has shot in a similar way around Canary Wharf in London, she decided to concentrate on the shapes and patterns forming in the water. “I probably shot about 100 pictures,” she laughs. “When editing down something like this, it’s a case of looking for the images where everything ‘sticks together’. You know when it works but you don’t necessarily know why, because it’s abstract and not adhering to anything like the rule of thirds.”

She settled on this image because of the way the light is moving through the frame, and that combined with the coppery colours pulls in the viewer’s eye. “Using a circular polariser helps cut any potentially distracting detail,” she says. “And the way in which the light intersects with the water hopefully keeps people interested enough to explore the image. Although there is colour, ripples and the glinting of the sun, nothing overlaps, and that separation is what made it stand out.”

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV with 24-70mm f/2.8 at 70mm, 1/125sec at f/10, ISO 800, polariser
Describing this area as one of her favourite places to photograph in Birmingham, Verity says, “There’s a lot to be said for going back to locations, getting a feel for how they look and studying how different angles can affect a composition.”

She also points out that composition can sometimes fall victim to dramatic weather conditions, where the excitement of what’s going on can overwhelm the message of the image itself. “It can be hard to evaluate how you pull the elements of the landscape together when you’re distracted by the weather,” she explains. “Is an image about light or is it about composition? When an image works well, it’s about the two complementing each other.”

In particular, she feels it took her a while to learn that light doesn’t have to mean drama, and this image is a case in point. “It was taken just before dusk, but conditions were very windy. I knew I needed a bit of reflection in my composition, so I had to wait for a moment when the wind dropped, otherwise I’d have lost not only the reflection of the Cube, but also the cloud at the top of the frame. And I really like that cloud!”

It’s also a case where a bit of rule-breaking hasn’t gone amiss, with the major part of the interest running through the centre of the frame. “But it’s not necessarily the architecture or boats that are holding the frame together,” she points out. “It’s actually the clouds.”
The Corpach Wreck is a few miles from Fort William in the Scottish Highlands. Built in 1975 as MV Dayspring, she ran aground in 2011 after a heavy storm and she now admires Ben Nevis on a daily basis.

Most photographers take this shot looking from her back towards Ben Nevis as the background, but I wanted to get a different take by looking from her bow with Glenfinnan in the background. The rain had been pouring all morning and I didn’t think I was going to get anything from this area, until suddenly it stopped. I nipped out with a Big Stopper and 0.3 ND hard grad to make the most of the darkening sky and fast-moving clouds. >>
Buachaille Etive Mòr, Glencoe

Buachaille Etive Mòr is easily identified as you first come into Glencoe. Its beauty hits you even when the tip is covered in cloud and mist. On this day, however, there wasn’t a lot of cloud covering the top and I wanted to emphasise the drama and the beauty of the swirling cloud, rather than the usual shot of looking up.

The Buachaille with the river in the foreground. I have shot this many times before, but on this day I wanted to show the loneliness of the peak. I used a Big Stopper to give the movement of the clouds and a 0.6 ND soft grad to darken the sky. I am really happy with the outcome of the image and the sky.

Lagangarbh Cottage, Glencoe

Owned by the National Trust for Scotland, Lagangarbh Hut can be found north of Buachaille Etive Mòr near the River Coupall.

This was a very early morning shot just after dawn, the clouds were very low and there was a fine drizzle in the air, resulting in pretty poor shooting conditions. However, there was something special and quaint about the misty hut sitting in the valley. For this image I doubled up, using a 0.9 ND medium grad and 0.6 ND medium grad together. This served not only to blur the low cloud but also to darken the surroundings, while at the same time keeping the cottage bright and the main attraction. My aim was to show the ruggedness of the terrain without making the image appear too wet and unappealing.

Visit davecullenphotography.co.uk
I had been chasing this photograph for a very long time, so when it all came together (with a good dose of luck!) it was even more rewarding. To achieve it, the stars really need to align, because this shot is only possible at low tide. It also needs to coincide with sunset and the weather has to play ball, too.

On this day, I was initially planning on photographing something else, but when I noticed the conditions were right, I rushed to the beach and kept photographing until the incoming tide chased me back on to the river promenade with a big smile on my face. It was one of those moments when you just know you nailed it.

The filter combination helped accentuate the water and cloud movement. Because of its profile, it’s tricky to photograph Tower Bridge using an ND grad, but the soft grad helped control the high contrast of the scene while not making the bridge too much of a silhouette. >>

**Phyllis Pley**

**London**

> **Tower Bridge, London**

Canon EOS 5D Mark III with Zeiss Milvus 18mm, 30 seconds at f/16, ISO 100, 0.9 ND soft grad, Little Stopper
Despite the epic location and perfect sunset conditions, this image doesn’t have a deep, character-defining story behind it. However, I did learn a great deal from setting it up, and it’s now one of my favourites.

This photo for me was all about making filters optimise the photography process. Could I have achieved the same result without a filter by exposing for the sky and underexposing the foreground? Probably yes, to be honest. Where the filter comes in handy, though, is by not having to lighten the foreground as much and making the editing process significantly simpler, quicker and easier while retaining maximum image quality and tonality. A little extra set-up time and getting the shot right in camera gives you the best starting point by the time you begin editing.

One piece of advice I always give fellow cityscape photographers when it comes to photographing roads is to have a little patience and to time your shot: in London, soon enough you’ll have an iconic red double-decker bus or black cab in your shot; in Lisbon a tram; in New York City a yellow cab. You get the idea…

The red bus in this image helped to make my composition more interesting, added scale to the building and sprinkled that extra touch of quintessential London into the scene.

This is one of the most common compositions in London. Some might say it’s a postcard photo or a standard tourist snap, but not me – even though I was surrounded by some 20 other people that evening who had the exact same idea for a picture.

Why is this spot so popular? Because it’s simply one of the most beautiful in London, and instead of trying to be different for the sake of it, I’d rather embrace this beauty and bring my own style to the scene. Using the Big Stopper allowed me to create a different mood from those other people around me. I love the sense of tranquillity and calm that can be achieved with long exposed, smooth water. The colours, coupled with the cloud cover and movement that evening, made for a shot I’m very happy with.

Another way I bring my own style into my shots is by split toning in Lightroom to subtly enhance the sunset’s colours a little further. Restraint is key.>>

Visit philippley.com

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**St Pancras International, London**

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Visit philippley.com
Kirkjufell is one of the most photographed mountains in Iceland, and is often pictured with Kirkjufellsfoss, the waterfalls, in the foreground. This location was my first stop after arriving in Iceland, so I was still getting used to the long days and short nights. This image was taken at 2am, just before the sun started to rise. At that time of the night, I pretty much had the place to myself, so I took a while to soak up where I was and explore the area.

After taking the "classic" Kirkjufell shot, I was keen to find an alternative angle from which to capture the mountain. I noticed that the wind had died down, and there wasn’t even a ripple on the water below the falls. I took a walk around the lake and discovered this composition. A few rounded river stones in the foreground anchored the image. The distinct shape of the mountain is prominently in the centre with the water surface providing a perfect mirror of the main subject. I was thrilled with the composition, as it not only emphasised Kirkjufell, but also positioned the high-level cloud that was catching the first colour of the day just above the mountain. >>
LEExposure

Horseshoe Falls

Tasmania is well known for its national parks, world-class hiking trails and impressive waterfalls. Nested in the Mount Field National Park is Horseshoe Falls, one of three main waterfalls in the area. I enjoy photographing Horseshoe Falls because there are so many engaging elements in the scene. However, this can be a challenge as it’s tempting to try and capture everything in the one image.

After shooting a broader perspective of the falls, I started looking for smaller scenes. Attracted by the patterns created by the water moving around this boulder, I worked the composition, positioning the rock in the centre of the image. Water from the falls leads the eye to this moss-covered rock. Above the waterfalls, the forest canopy opens up slightly to allow a little more light to filter down to illuminate the moss. To maintain interest in the middle of the image, I darkened the rocks around the edges. I also increased the highlights in the moss, enhancing the colour and textures on the stone.

Elephant Rocks, Western Australia

The Great South Coast is one of my favourite places to photograph in Western Australia. There are so many bays and interesting rock shapes to explore. About 20km west of the small town of Denmark is a bay called Elephant Rocks, named after the rounded shapes of the granite rocks that have weathered over time. From certain angles, the rocks look like a herd of elephants.

I have visited this location many times before, so wanted to capture a composition that was different from previous images. The low clouds in the sky meant there was little chance of a sunrise, so I went with the conditions I had. My eye was drawn to this rock, which was sitting on its own, approximately 10m from the shore. I tried to accentuate the feeling of loneliness by having the camera at a low angle, so isolating the boulder and capturing as much of the cloudy sky as I could. In post-processing, I brought out the detail and colour in the granite rock, helping to separate it from the background. >>
It must be an unwritten rule that you can’t visit Iceland without taking a picture of one of the many churches dotted throughout the island. Their distinctive but simple structure and shape makes them fantastic subjects.

While travelling around the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, I came across the famous black church. However, the conditions weren’t ideal for photographing it. A cloudless sky with midday sunlight meant there was too much contrast in the scene.

On my last day in Iceland, as I was returning to Reykjavík, I found this church in the south-west. The clouds had moved in during the day, providing this wonderfully dramatic sky. To take this shot, I stood on a stone wall in the car park across from the church. Because it’s a popular tourist attraction, there were plenty of people moving around, and I had to remove them later in post-processing, as well as a wire fence across the front. When cropping the image, I gave the church as much space as I could to add to the drama created by the clouds.

Visit andrewmarr.com.au

Nikon D800 with 24-70mm f/2.8 at 40mm, 1/100sec at f/5.6, ISO 100, 0.3 ND soft grad, Landscape Polariser
Paul Ashby-Johnson
Cornwall

Bedruthan Steps

This image was taken on a North Cornwall coastal walk with my wife, a 20-minute drive from where we live. The wind was so strong, we struggled to stand up in places. There was a mixture of sunshine and showers as the wind was moving the clouds so quickly. Walking from Mawgan Porth towards Bedruthan Steps, I could see the rain coming in from the north-west, so we quickened our steps to try to avoid another soaking. I could then see a faint rainbow, so we hurried down to the viewpoint. I quickly scrabbled to get my camera set up with the strong wind coming straight off the sea. To add to this, we had the sea spray and rain in our faces. I had little time, but managed to compose it by aiming to separate the huge sea stacks. This gave a focal point to lead your eye through the image. >>
This engine house is probably one of the most photographed in the county, and for good reason. I checked the forecast, which predicted very little cloud, but I decided to go there anyway. As I walked down the coast path towards it, there was a bank of sea mist coming in behind it, albeit in the distance. I decided to set up using my 70-200mm lens to try to compress it, which worked quite well. There were a lot of people around watching the sun go down, so timing was key to isolate the subject.

Framing the image was easy, I had the bright sunset from the right, the mist behind and the contour of the landscape. All these elements gave it real atmosphere.

I decided to venture down to Porthcurno beach for sunrise, an hour’s drive from home. The conditions looked very promising for early-morning photography. As I walked down towards the beach, the sky began turning pink, so I hurried up, keen not to miss any shooting opportunities.

I set up just on the edge of the sea. I wanted sand in the foreground with the granite outcrops coming in from the left, leading towards Trewyn Dinas peninsula.

This peninsula is famous for its Logan rock. The composition looked good on the back of the camera, and now all I needed to do was wait. The sky lit up orange, catching the cloud formation beautifully and the exposure was just right. This gave me roughly half a second to allow just the perfect amount of movement in the water. >>
Mike Prince
Cumbria

Brotherswater, Cumbria

It was a classic Lakeland day, with not too much happening in the sky and a gentle drizzle as I walked along the shore of Brotherswater. This shore, while beautiful, is a difficult place to make a strong composition. All the best viewpoints are along the shore rather than out from it. This inevitably means that much of the interest is along one edge of the frame rather than spread across it.

On this day, flooding had washed up this branch, which was caught among the rocks at the water’s edge. Using a wideangle lens allowed me to give prominence to the shape of the branch, while a long exposure produced a smooth canvas upon which to work.

The composition is designed around a zigzag starting at the lower left, running through the branch and rocks before turning towards the cloud-capped hill at upper left. The image reminds us to head out on the grey drizzly days, which often have a beauty all of their own.

Kelly Hall Tarn, Cumbria

This quiet location near Torver in the Lake District tends to be visited only by a few local dog walkers and landscape photographers. It’s not in the tourist books, but is a quiet gem nonetheless. I visit this tarn frequently; being only two minutes from a car park helps to make it an even more attractive location.

On this day, the light was gentle rather than striking, and under such instances the priority of the composition becomes much higher. Front-to-back sharpness was critical as the tiny droplets on the leaves were important to the scene. I used a 0.6 ND hard grad to control the sky and a Landscape Polariser to enhance the contrast of the surface leaves against the darker water. The image was processed in Adobe Camera Raw and Photoshop. For me, the whole picture is about the beautiful water droplets on the foreground leaves at the bottom of the frame. >>
Elgol, Isle of Skye

The Isle of Skye offers virtually unlimited opportunities for the landscape photographer. Of its many world-class locations, Elgol remains my favourite and one, despite its popularity, to which I return time after time. There is a raw aspect of nature here which I find unequalled anywhere else in the UK. This image was made just after 5am on an exhilarating May morning. The boulder, made famous by Joe Cornish, needs a high tide to allow it to feature most strongly. The hardest aspect is to try to keep the iconic images out of one’s head and allow something that is of you to come through.

I chose a moderately long exposure to capture the sense of movement in the water without losing all the texture. As always in such wild conditions, it was a challenge to keep the lens and filters dry, as was ensuring the camera remained rock steady on its tripod. The aim with such an image is to try to convey to the viewer what it felt like to be there in that moment.

Nikon D800 with 16-35mm f/4 at 16mm, four seconds at f/11, ISO 100, 0.6 ND hard grad, 0.3 ND filter

Visit mikeprincelandscapes.co.uk
Anatomy of an autumn image

Autumn is often the landscape photographer’s favourite season, for obvious reasons. Three professionals explain how they go about making the most of this photogenic time of year.

Scaleber Force, Yorkshire Dales

By Colin Jarvis

Lancashire

This picturesque waterfall near Settle in the Yorkshire Dales is a very familiar location to Colin Jarvis; at some times of year, he might find himself visiting it on an almost weekly basis. On this occasion, in November 2018, he was with a client on a one-to-one workshop, and they had started at the bottom of the falls, slowly working their way up over the ensuing hour and a half.

“It’s important to time visits carefully, as the descent to the falls is steep and can be slippery after rain. If there has been a heavy rainfall, it can be tricky to access the area. Too little rain and there’s barely a trickle to photograph. “Conditions on this day were particularly good,” Colin recalls, “with nice dappled light and broken cloud overhead. This image was shot at just after midday; you can take pictures there with the sun overhead because the tree canopy softens things.”

Thanks to the variety at this location, it’s possible to compose in either landscape or portrait orientations. On this occasion, Colin chose the former, as he wanted to include the beech tree trunk and its base in the top right of his frame. He composed so that the eye starts in the bottom right of the frame, moving across to the tree then over to the falls. “It’s not an accident that the shelf of rock is on the bottom left and coming in at a diagonal,” he explains. “This sort of thing is particularly important when you’re shooting wide — and I’m at the 17mm end of my zoom here. A couple of feet one way or another, a bit of a zoom or a different angle can make quite an impact on the shot.”

Canon EOS 5D Mark II with EF 17-40mm f/4L USM at 17mm, 15 seconds at f/15, ISO 100, 0.6 ND soft grad upside down, Little Stopper

Using a Little Stopper gave Colin a shutter speed of 15 seconds. Normally quite a long exposure for a waterfall, it has nonetheless retained some detail in the water.

This beech tree trunk provides a solid anchor in this part of the frame, and stops the eye from straying out of the image. Colin wanted to include it because the light at its base was so appealing.

As with the rock on the left of the frame, it was important to the overall composition not to crop this rock in any way.

By using a 0.6 ND soft grad upside down in the holder, Colin was able to reduce the brightness of the foreground, where there was a lot of stray light.

The diagonal created by this moss-covered shelf of rock helps to lead the eye into the frame.

About the Photographer

Colin Jarvis describes his early attempts at photography, while still a teenager, as “typically angsty, moody stuff, but great fun”. Like many, he set up a darkroom in a downstairs toilet, but it was once digital photography came along that his interest became more serious. By this point, he was a teacher of religious studies, but eventually he went part time in order to take a foundation degree in photography, which he followed up with an MA at the University of Cumbria. “I started running workshops at weekend,” he says, “and really enjoyed it. I then left full-time teaching to concentrate on running workshops and residencies.”

He now shoots both landscape and urban photography, and has a particular passion for minimalist architecture (not that you’d know from the image shown here). “I love autumn,” he says. “There’s often great light, the colours are gorgeous and dawn isn’t too early. It’s the ideal season.”

Visit colinjarvis.co.uk
As with any outdoor photographer, Lynne Douglas always looks forward to autumn and the breaking up of the relentless green into hues of red, orange and gold. When she made the image shown here, she had headed to Kilmun Arboretum, near Dunoon in Argyll and Bute, with the hope of finding some vivid autumn colour. She wasn’t disappointed.

The arboretum was established in 1930 with the planting of some 260 species of tree; the aim was to find out which might thrive in Scottish soil types and conditions.

For her image, Lynne looked for red leaves among the mass of leaves. “I had gone looking for the perfect tree with fallen leaves underneath it,” she says. “But it turned out the trees here were too densely packed together to give the shape I was after.”

However, the leaves were still on the tree and moving in the wind, which gave her the idea for a more abstract approach. “I realised I could capture the essence of both the tree and the season by focusing in on the leaves and capturing their movement,” she says. “It was then a question of finding a leaf to focus on.”

In among the mass of leaves, Lynne picked out this gold-coloured one as it stood out from the red of its neighbours. It was then simply a question of experimenting. Because it was such a bright day, she needed the help of a neutral-density filter to slow down the shutter speed sufficiently. Then, handholding the camera, she took some images where she zoomed in and out, and others where she twisted the camera. However, these resulted in the loss of too much detail, so in the end she stuck with a simple long exposure to capture the leaves as they moved. “Too long an exposure and I ended up with plenty of colour but no definition,” she explains. “This shot was a fairly short shutter speed of 1/2sec. It’s fine to have one colour blurred, but with abstract photography you generally don’t want all the colours to be equally soft. The joy of this kind of photography is the lack of rules, as it’s all about experimentation.”

Being able to distinguish details such as the tree branches is important in terms of striking the right balance between abstract and recognisable.

Even with abstract images, it’s important to have a focal point, so Lynne made sure this gold-coloured leaf retained its shape and the right amount of detail.

Too long a shutter speed, and these red leaves would have lost their definition and become a solid block of colour. As they are, they appear almost feather-like.

Lynne was shooting down on to the leaves, hence she was able to include patches of the tree bark in the frame.

Because conditions were so bright, it was necessary to use a 0.9 ND filter to lengthen the shutter speed sufficiently to create a blurred effect.

Now, visitors can take in everything from redwoods to giant sequoia to Chilean southern beech. But it was the Japanese maple that Lynne specifically wanted to photograph on this occasion. “I had gone looking for the perfect tree with fallen leaves underneath it,” she explains. “But it turned out the trees here were too densely packed together to give the shape I was after.”

However, the leaves were still on the tree and moving in the wind, which gave her the idea for a more abstract approach. “I realised I could capture the essence of both...”
> Corfe Castle in Autumn

By Andy Farrer
Dorset

Shot in 2014, this image was the last Andy Farrer made that autumn, before the frosts made the remaining leaves finally drop from the trees. “I had been hoping for a misty morning,” he recalls, “but as it turned out, there was only a slight haze, which can be seen towards the right of the frame.”

It was just after sunrise and, realising the scene he was looking at from the top of the hill wasn’t going to come to anything, he remembered this tree – which he had photographed several times previously, in all seasons – and saw that it still had its leaves where others had already lost theirs. “It’s a lovely viewpoint at that time of day,” he says, “with the light hitting the castle and tree from the side.”

At first, he set up a shot from under the tree, using it to frame the castle beyond, but when this didn’t work he realised a much simpler composition would be more effective. Including the tree in its entirety in the frame helps lead the eye towards the castle, and allows the viewer to appreciate its shape and the vivid russet-coloured leaves. And while the sky might be considered lacking interest, Andy felt this contributed to the simplicity of the scene. “The sky isn’t at all distracting, which is important, but it still has some pleasing colour,” he says. “It would have been a different image if there had been dramatic cloud, and this might have ended up competing with the tree. It’s always a good idea to be sensitive to what the light’s doing. A really dramatic sky would have meant composing more dynamically, but this is quite a classic composition.”

The rising sun meant there were some very bright highlights on the right-hand side of the frame, so in order to counteract this, Andy used a 0.6 ND soft grad at a 45-degree angle, while a polariser helped cut through any shine on the tree’s leaves.

In order to include both the tree and the rolling hill on the right, he shot two landscape-orientation images at 50mm, and stitched them together afterwards to make a panorama.

There’s just enough subtle detail in the sky to give it interest, without it overpowering the rest of the frame. A sky with dramatic cloud might have required a different composition.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Andy Farrer’s entry into photography was via an inspirational art teacher who saw his talent and encouraged it. So passionate was Andy about his photography, he was entered into the GCSE for the subject (despite his school not actually teaching it), and had enough work that all he needed was to write an essay and the A grade was his.

Having started off shooting weddings and portraits, it was around 2007 that he took his first steps into landscape, and it was at this point he “found out what I was meant to be doing”.

In 2015, he won the coveted Take a View Landscape Photographer of the Year award, with his image of a snow-covered beach in Dorset. It was something of a launchpad for him, and gave him a higher profile in the industry. He is now a tutor with Light and Land, runs his own workshops and one-to-one tuition sessions, as well as running a printing business with his business partner in Swanage.

Visit andyfarrer.co.uk
The knowledge

GET THE BEST OUT OF YOUR FILTERS WITH THESE TIPS FROM THE PROS

Take a seat

I recently photographed a wonderful antique Mendlesham Windsor chair for a client. As well as being an extremely elegant piece of furniture, this particular piece was notable for its beautifully grained burr elm seat. While I found that natural light from the window revealed the chair’s shape and colour successfully, this also created a little too much flare and reflection on the heavily polished seat.

I used the landscape polarising filter, polarised almost to its maximum, to minimise the glare. What has impressed me most about the latest version of this filter is its ability to minimise glare while still maintaining that lovely sheen and sparkle from a reflective surface. Its very subtle warming effect also helped bring out the rich tones of the wood. >>

Lizzie Shepherd

Visit lizzieshepherd.com

"Shooting in natural light brought out the best in this chair, while the LEE100 polariser removed glare from the polished seat"
Positioning a soft neutral-density graduated filter can be tricky, as the graduation line is so subtle. So, instead of looking through the viewfinder, just switch your camera to Live View and use the histogram to aid positioning. Slide the grad filter into place in the holder and when you see the highlights stop clipping on the right-hand side, the filter is in the perfect place. Easy.

Craig Roberts

Use the histogram

“A soft grad is invaluable – and easy to use if you check your histogram while placing it”
Choosing the right ND filter

Most photographers love long exposures, with soft, silky water flowing through the frame, and it’s rare for a landscape photographer to head out without a selection of neutral-density filters.

When confronted with moving water, the temptation is often to blur it to oblivion with your strongest filter. However, it’s worth assessing the situation and deciding what treatment will best suit the scene. While there are times when it is appropriate to turn water into ethereal mist with an ultra-long exposure, there are other occasions when a much shorter exposure, preserving the texture of the water, works better.

For example, in my view, waterfalls cascading over rocks benefit from retaining some texture in the water and an exposure time of just a few seconds will do the trick. Waves crashing against harbour walls or cliffs also seem to benefit from this treatment, whereas seascapes shot in the pastel tones of dawn or dusk can be more suited to the softer look of a longer exposure. So, when you’re next shooting moving water, experiment with different filters and a variety of shutter speeds to see what works best.

Mark Bauer

Visit: markbauerphotography.com

“For this shot of ‘Diamond Beach’ in southern Iceland, I wanted to record the receding wave as streaks of water leading out to sea. An exposure of one second proved ideal.”

EOS 5DS with 16-35mm at 16mm, one second at f/11, ISO 100, 0.9 ProGlass ND
Each month, on our website, a different professional photographer critiques a range of images submitted by Lee Filters’ users. Here, it’s the turn of Pete Bridgwood. To see more images from YourView, visit LeeFilters.com

Mount Tamalpais State Park
by David Safanda

Pete Bridgwood “A truly wonderful and breathtaking image displaying mastery of every stage of the photographic process, including judicious use of the Reverse ND Grad. This image is all about colour, with three texturally distinct bands perfectly juxtaposed. Red, orange and yellow set the sky ablaze, then green is separated down to occupy the lower third; finally, the rolling blue and indigo pastel cloud inversion harmonises with the foreground greens and complements the inferno above. David has processed his image masterfully, unafraid to show off these colours as nature intended. If I had to provide critique, it would be that the triangle of distant trees on the lower right of the image and the rocks in the middle of the lower edge are distracting. For me, cropping out the right hand 25 per cent and the lower 10 per cent would simplify the image further, and make it perfect.”

Visit: davidsafanda.smugmug.com; Instagram @davidsafanda

Mount Tamalpais State Park
by David Safanda

Curves, Llandudno
by Neil Hulme

Pete Bridgwood “When we start creating black and white photographs, there is a gradual realisation that although apparently simple, it is in fact complex. A compelling image shot in colour may not work in monochrome and vice versa. In order to create great black and white images, a different way of seeing is required. We need to look at the world with tone-tuned ‘black and white eyes’. This additional element in the process of visualisation can be demanding. Neil is a master black-and-white photographer. I love this image for its simplicity, its gracefulness and its crafted perfection. The simplicity comes from the use of monochrome and the perfect blend of controlled textures versus negative space. Its grace comes from the visual flow created by the curve of the paving and the understated resonance between the pool and the insinuated curve in the sky, which is created by the contrasting light and dark elements of the cloudscape. Perfect.”

Visit: neilhulme.smugmug.com
Rattray Head

by Brian Doyle

Pete Bridgwood “Brian’s image resonates with me at a visceral level. He has translated the essence of how it feels to be standing on the coast with an approaching storm extremely well. I love the way he’s emphasised the texture in the brooding cloudscape, helped by the judicious placement of the two-stop ND grad and masterful processing. The colours are cooked to perfection and seasoned with just the right amount of saturation to delight the most critical of palates. His colour grading is also fabulous.

It would be very hard to improve on this image, although I wonder if it might benefit from a marginal reduction in saturation of the sand at the bottom left, and very subtle darkening of the right side next to the lighthouse. However, these are processing nuances that are subjective. A wonderful image.”

Visit: briand Doylephotography.com
> Niagara Falls

by Jose Marvin Evasco

Pete Bridgwood “Jose’s image is a true photographic celebration of an iconic location, and features a blazing crepuscular colour palette. This is an image that instantly grabs your attention, but also becomes increasingly engaging the longer you look at it. It has both wow factor and staying power, and that is a rare combination. The composition is a powerfully heady mix of teal and orange, and the exposure – facilitated by the Big Stopper – is the optimum length to render both the water and the cloudscape dynamic.

My personal preference for such well-known locations as these is to process them to perfection. I would clone out both the distracting tower to the upper right and the building in the snow at the right edge. I would also tighten the frame by cropping off some of the left and lower edges, to focus our attention more on the main subject.”

Visit: nagnitronip18.net; Instagram @marvinevasco

> Sunset storm

by Chase Hirt

Pete Bridgwood “Incredibly, Chase is a high-school senior from California; his gifted vision belies his youth. Here’s an image shot in Malibu, which celebrates a rare twilight treat, as this is what happens when the setting sun lights up a mackerel sky from beneath. Chase has captured and processed all 103 seconds of this moment beautifully. The Big Stopper has stretched time by the perfect amount to blur the water and the cloudscape in a scene that probably hasn’t changed much for millions of years.

If I have one criticism, it’s that I don’t like 3:2 ratio images in the portrait aspect. If we were to crop the image to 4:5, it would lose too much detail from the sand and the upper clouds, but a 3:4 crop would be a compromise that looks more harmonious to my eyes.”

Visit: imagineirephotography.com; Instagram @imaginairephotography
IN RECENT YEARS, FRONT-TO-BACK SHARPNESS HAS TAKEN A BACK SEAT FOR MANY LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHERS, WITH DELIBERATELY BLURRED, HANDHELD LONG EXPOSURES BECOMING MORE POPULAR. MARK CORNICK EXPLAINS WHY THIS APPROACH MATCHES HIS VISION OF THE WORLD.

**Softly does it**

**Mark Cornick**

I studied film at university, so I have always been passionate about imagery and visuals. I purchased my first DLSR in 2012 with the aim of shooting video, which I did for some time. My wife’s grandfather, Tom Davies, who is a very accomplished and respected photographer, introduced me to the world of stills photography, and that is how my passion for it came about.

My first real photographic subject was urban and architectural photography, and in particular images of the London Underground. The architecture of the Underground is fascinating, and I still enjoy looking back at these images. It is, however, a claustrophobic and frantic atmosphere to take photographs in, with constant interruption from security, so I soon took my photography back above ground and into the open air.

When and why did you start taking photographs?

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When did you realise you wanted to take photography more seriously?

I think it was quite early on in my career that I realised this was going to be more than a hobby for me. Going on a weekend architectural workshop with the very talented Vulture Labs in London was a key moment. This was when I really learnt how to make the best use of filters and learnt how to make successful long-exposure images. The techniques I picked up from this workshop have been key in moving my photography forward, especially on the journey into more abstract work.

Who and what were your influences?

I have been influenced by and draw inspiration from multiple sources. Chris Friel, Doug Chinnery, Valda Bailey and Andy Gray continue to be great sources of inspiration for abstract photographers. As with all ICM...
photographers, I have studied the paintings of Turner. There is also the active community of photographers on Twitter and Instagram that helps to motivate me.

My abstract urban work draws inspiration from the amazing London-based street photographer Joshua Jackson. I would encourage everyone to look at his work.

LF
You are now known for your multiple exposure and ICM work. When did you start exploring this?

MC
I think my later architectural work started to become more abstract as I looked to isolate details, patterns and shapes, rather than a wideangle reproduction of a building. From there, I began to explore how to take abstract photography to the next level, and came across the work of Doug Chinnery and Valda Bailey, among others, and started to study the techniques in more detail.

I then started taking ICM images on a trip to Cornwall about three years ago, immediately fell in love with the technique, and haven’t looked back since.

LF
What is it about this style of photography that represents your view of the world in a way that ‘straight’ photography can’t?

MC
It’s hard to explain in words, but I feel much more of an emotional connection to my abstract work, especially that of my ‘Fathom’ series, from Cornwall. I have a very strong bond with the Cornish landscape, and looking back on these images now takes me back to each particular shoot, and a sense of calm and joy of being on an empty beach.

One of the great things about abstract images is that, even though many people use these techniques, no one will ever create the exact same image again. It’s almost like making a limited edition one-of-one print with each exposure.

LF
What subjects work best for you?

MC
One thing that is noticeable about my portfolio is that my projects can be polar opposites of each other in terms of subject matter. My ‘Fathom’ images are calming, coastal seascapes, while ‘Soho Nights’ is a futuristic Blade Runner-inspired vision of a bustling neon noir city. This is why I now categorise myself as an abstract photographer, as while my subject matter might differ hugely, my work all comes together from utilising abstract techniques.

My favourite place to shoot is on an empty beach at sunset, preferably in Cornwall. I find coastal locations work best when creating ICM images, with the motion of the waves providing the perfect subject matter.

‘String Theory’ is a botanical-based mini-project I have been working on that combines both ICM and multiple exposure to create one final image, all in-camera. The images were all taken in the fantastic greenhouses at Kew Gardens. The intricate patterns created by shooting macro and using the abstract techniques mentioned made this quite a fitting title for the project.

I think if I lived a little closer to the coast, I would start to specialise in coastal photography. Being by the sea and on an empty beach is where I most feel at home with my camera. Even though I have been shooting in...
London for many years, I still always feel self-conscious about shooting there, as it does tend to bring quite a lot of negative attention, whether that be from overzealous security guards or members of the public.

**LF** What do you plan a shoot? Do you decide what method to use once you get to the location?

**MC** Sourcing and researching a location will always come first. On a coastal shoot, I will always bring all my equipment, so I can adapt to the conditions when on location. Then I am free to take whatever type of images I feel inspired to. This might be a more conventional long-exposure image with a tripod, abstract details, or the freedom that comes with shooting handheld ICM images.

**LF** How do you plan a shoot? Do you decide what method to use once you get to the location?

**MC** When shooting on the coast, usually during golden hours of light, all of the same principles of conventional photography apply. We want to avoid burning out highlights and that sort of thing. What I am mainly looking for is creating patterns with the movement of the waves, and also looking for elements that work well with motion, such as moving grass or seaweed, to aid foreground composition.

In an ideal world, there will be some clouds to help create a sense of motion. Colour and reflected light are also things I look for. I love it when golden sunset light reflects from wet sand, as it can create some very pleasing results.

**LF** What do you have to bear in mind when creating abstract images?

**MC** For the majority of my shoots I use my Canon EOS 6D body with a small selection of lenses – 17-40mm, 70-200mm and 105mm macro. For my long-exposure work, I use a selection; the Little Stopper, Big Stopper, ND grads and polariser. I have always used Canon DSLRs and the 6D does everything I need it to, apart from having weather sealing and only two in-camera multiple exposure modes.

When shooting in London for images such as my ‘Soho Nights’, I have a Fujifilm X-T20, with a 50mm prime lens. This is a much more discreet camera for use on the streets of London, and is smaller and much lighter than carrying a DSLR and multiple lenses.

**LF** What kit do you use?

**MC** There is no better way to learn than to experiment, and shoot as much as possible. Once you have learnt more about planning and creating what you want, you can start to experiment with different ideas and methods.

For those who would like to experiment with this style of photography, how should they go about it?
LEExposure

The fundamental technical aspects of each technique, there is nothing stopping you. One thing is for sure about these techniques – success rate is low. From an evening shooting ICM on the beach I will take maybe 300 exposures. If five of those get edited and printed, I call that a good day’s work.

When shooting ICM images, set your camera to a relatively long exposure (around 2-3 seconds), and during the exposure, move the camera around to create an image with a sense of motion, and a feeling of ethereal otherworldliness.

Firstly, there are a few bits of kit essential to creating an abstract ICM, but the best thing is you can work without a tripod, and I love the freedom this brings.

You will need any camera that has manual controls (or there are even smartphone apps that allow you to create this type of effect). For shooting at sunset, a Little Stopper helps to create the necessary long exposure. If you want to shoot ICM during the day, you may find you need a Big Stopper to create a long enough exposure. And, because you’re going to be taking a lot of images, you’ll need at least a 16GB SD card. Finally, you need patience and a willingness to experiment.

When it comes to shooting, I’ve found that a 2-3 second exposure gives the best results (I use the LEE Stopper app to help calculate my exposure time) and it really is as simple as clicking the shutter and moving the camera.

During the exposure, you can create whatever movements you like. It’s all down to experimentation, and what results please you. Move the camera up and down, left and right, shake it, walk with it, move in little circles – it’s entirely up to you.

Just remember – an awful lot of images won’t be keepers, but don’t be discouraged, and when you find a movement and a composition that pleases you, keep shooting and shooting.

One final thing. If you are shooting at sunset, remember the light will change with every passing minute, and you will need to keep adjusting your settings to compensate for this.

LF

And what about multiple exposures?

MC

Multiple-exposure photography can be quite similar to ICM, in terms of creating a high volume of images, >>
the need to keep experimenting, and overall patience. There is so much scope for multiple exposure photography, and almost any subject matter works with it. I have found the intricate patterns and shapes of shooting macro botanical images works very well for multiple exposure, and you could even combine ICM into your images as well.

You may be limited by the functions on your camera with multiple exposure. My Canon EOS 6D only has two different blend modes, but I can blend up to nine exposures. It’s worth remembering that this sort of photography does put a strain on your camera, and the more exposures you make the longer the camera will take to process them, which can be frustrating. Also do make sure to take spare batteries with you, as multiple exposure photography can drain a battery in half a day or less.

I do find that two or maybe three images at most provide some of the better results. In terms of how to move the camera between your exposures, it’s often the very subtle movements that provide the best results. But don’t let that stop you from experimenting. You might want to move to an entirely new location to create your second or third exposure.

I’m still very much experimenting myself with multiple exposure and how to achieve the best results.

LF
What are your plans for the future?

MC
In the short term, I would like to continue to shoot new images as much as possible, continue to experiment with abstract techniques, and expand my portfolios. My long-term goal is for photography to become a full-time job, offering workshops and print sales. It would be incredible to one day have a solo exhibition of my work – that would be a very proud moment for me.
Your pictures critiqued by the professionals

Each month, LEE Filters invites a guest photographer to analyse five images of their choice – submitted by you.

Ever wanted feedback on your images from the top photographers in the business? Well, now’s your chance. YourView showcases the best of our users’ pictures, whether they’ve been shot using a polariser, an ND grad or a Stopper filter.

Critiques so far have come from names that will be familiar to readers of LEExposure, including Colin Prior, Jeremy Walker, Mark Bauer and Antony Spencer.

To be in with a chance of having your image featured in YourView, simply visit the LEE Filters website and upload your chosen photograph.

Go to www.leefilters.com to submit your image

Look out for the next issue of LEExposure in 2020

Editor: Ailsa McWhinnie
LEE Filters: Graham Merritt and Peter Sturt

To contact LEExposure, email feedback@leefilters.com, putting LEExposure in the subject line

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