

PHOTOGRAPHY MASTERCLASS

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TELECONVERTERS

LIGHTROOM

BUILDING DEPTH
IN BLACK &
WHITE

MASTERCLASS

MASTER THE ART OF SHOOTING
REFLECTIONS



PHOTOGRAPHY

MASTERCLASS

MAGAZINE



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EDITOR'S NOTE

W elcome to this edition
of Photography
Masterclass Magazine

Stop looking up and start looking down. In our latest masterclass, we break down the exact techniques you need to capture flawless architectural reflections - from conquering the wind and nailing perfect symmetry to focus-stacking for front-to-back sharpness. If you want to turn a standard building into a mind-bending mirror image, you'll learn everything you need to know to get the shot.

Also in this issue, we interview self-taught photographer Elisa Miller who has established a remarkably distinct voice in fine art portraiture. Elisa uses rich color, meticulous set design, and cinematic lighting to explore the layered complexities of identity

and self-perception in womanhood. Operating like lingering frames from an imaginary film, Elisa's dream-like images celebrate visual beauty while holding a compelling tension just beneath the surface. Here, we explore her creative process, her transition into photography, and the philosophies that guide her striking visual storytelling. In this interview, Elisa discussed her creative process, her transition into photography, and the philosophies that guide her striking visual storytelling.

We hope you enjoy this issue. If you try out any of the techniques mentioned, we'd love you to see your results, so please do share them with us in our [readers' Facebook Group](#), or on Instagram using hashtag #PhotographyMasterclassMagazine

Happy Shooting!



Gill



MESSAGE FROM GILL ROBERTS
THE EDITOR

EDITOR'S CHOICE

A Hand-Picked Selection of
our Favorite Photos



**Woman Standing On Rocky Shore
Near Ocean Cliffs At Sunset**
By: Karsten Winegeart
[Instagram](#)



Man With Blurred Face In Red And Blue Light

By: Karsten Winegeart

Shot Details: Sony a7 IV, at 70mm, f/3.2,
1/500 sec, ISO 500

[Instagram](#)

EDITORS CHOICE



**Observatory Dome Surrounded By
Autumn Forest From Above**
By: Kristaps Ungurs
[Instagram](#)



**Woman In Kimono Stands
In Sunlight On Street**

By: Mak Photography

Shot Details: Fujifilm X-H1, at 23mm, f/8,
1/900 sec, ISO 640

[Instagram](#)



**Symmetrical View Of Modern
Apartment Buildings Looking Up**

By: Mike Hindle

Shot Details: Sony a7C II, at 50mm, f/8,
1/125 sec, ISO 100

[Portfolio](#)



A Man With A Beard Wearing A Green Hoodie
By: Milad Nady
[Instagram](#)



White And Brown City Buildings During Daytime

By: Pedro Lastra

Shot Details: Nikon D750, at 26mm, f/9,
1/6 sec, ISO 100

[Portfolio](#)

EDITORS CHOICE



Modern Glass Building Against A Clear Sky
By: Simone Hutsch
[Instagram](#)



Person Holds Rock With Encouraging Message On Snowy Mountain

By: Slava Auchynnikau

Shot Details: Sony a7C, at 24mm, f/6.3, 1/640 sec, ISO 80

[Instagram](#)



Two People Riding Horses Through A Dry, Mountainous Landscape.

By: Spenser Sembrat

Shot Details: Sony a7 IV, at 24mm, f/2.8, 1/2000 sec, ISO 250

[Instagram](#)

INSPIRATION



INSPIRATION:

Why Your Compositions Are Flat
(And the 15 Rules to Fix Them)

VIDEO: WHY YOUR COMPOSITIONS ARE FLAT (AND THE 15 RULES TO FIX THEM)

by SERGE RAMELLI



In this video, Serge Ramelli shares 15 powerful photography composition tips to help you take better cityscape, travel, and landscape photos. If your photos feel flat, messy, or amateur, these composition tricks will help you create images with more depth, story, and visual impact.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

I'm passionate about photography. I specialize in landscapes, cities and interior designs. I love to learn new photography or retouching techniques and share them. I like very dramatic type photos, inspired by world famous movies. I think that creating images for people to enjoy is the most amazing job in the world. For more tutorials visit my [website](#) or [YouTube channel](#), or view my [portfolio](#).

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THE LOWDOWN ON THE SIGMA 20-200MM FULL-FRAME ZOOM LENS

By Ryan Sitzman



A Strong Contender For The Title of Best
Overall Travel Zoom Lens

I think I finally have proof that some entity (I'm guessing it was Google or LEGO) has been stealing my thoughts and selling them. Or I suppose it could all just be an interesting coincidence.

You see, around six months ago, I was writing an article about the Sigma 200mm f/2.0 Art series lens. It looked like a fantastic lens, but the price tag of \$3,300 put it well out of reach for me, and likely out of reach for the majority of non-professional photographers as well.



"Too rich for my blood," I thought, "and it's a prime lens, so I wouldn't often be in situations where I could get much use out of it anyway. It would be cool if they made a similar lens with a zoom, though, especially if they knocked a couple grand off the price."

Well, my thoughts were read, my prayers were answered, and/or market research was analyzed, and Sigma has done just that: they released a 20-200mm full-frame zoom lens, and at just under \$1,000, it costs less than a third as much as the 200mm f/2.0 prime lens.

Do I *know* that they stole my thoughts and used my idea, and can I *prove* it with "evidence"? No. But if you'd like to credit me anyway, I'd be happy to accept it. However Sigma came to the decision to make this lens, the results are quite exciting. Let's take a closer look at what this lens can do, and who it's best suited for.

With this 20-200mm f/3.5-6.3 lens, Sigma has released a strong contender for the title of Best Overall Travel Zoom Lens. There are other full-frame zoom lenses, obviously, but none of them go as wide as 20mm, especially at this price point. That wide angle can be useful for capturing expansive landscapes, large landmarks, and groups of people, so that makes it particularly useful for situations that we commonly encounter when traveling. Additionally, the long zoom range makes it a strong performer for other situations such as wildlife and sports photography.

This lens is also well-suited for travel due to its physical size. It weighs approximately 1.2 pounds, has a diameter of 3 inches, and is only 4.5 inches long when retracted. It's not so tiny that you'll lose it between your sofa cushions, but it is compact and light enough that it should easily fit in most camera bags, and it won't be exhausting to carry around all day when you're on the move.

This is a telescoping zoom lens, so if you zoom in to the furthest point of its range, the lens will expand to approximately double its physical length. If you carry your camera on a strap and you're concerned about the lens extending while you're walking, there's a special "Lock" switch on the side of the lens. It locks the lens in position so that it doesn't move in or out during normal movement, such as bouncing while you're walking.

However, if you start to manually turn the focus ring while the lock is in place (for example, if you're trying to take a picture, but you forget that the lock is on), then the lock automatically disengages and lets you zoom in and out again. It's a small feature, but I think it's pretty cool.

There aren't too many other notable specs or "features" to the lens, though it's worth mentioning that it has the standard switch to select between autofocus and manual focus. It also comes with a relatively compact lens hood, and the front of the lens is compatible with 72-millimeter filters. The lens is primarily marketed for the Sony E Mount, although there is also an L Mount version for photographers who use compatible Panasonic and Leica cameras.

In terms of performance, the lens boasts quick and responsive autofocus. Unlike its much more expensive cousins, it doesn't have any in-lens image stabilization, so if that's important to you, you should be sure to pair it with a camera body that has in-body image stabilization.





The variable aperture is another area where the lens doesn't necessarily come up short, but it does illustrate the difference between this and a professional lens that costs several times as much. If you're at the maximum wide angle and shooting at $f/3.5$, the background will be somewhat artistically blurred, but it won't be nearly as noticeable and pleasant as it would be with a faster aperture. It's not a deal-breaker, but it does affirm its place as part of Sigma's "Contemporary" collection, which are more modest and budget-friendly lenses, as opposed to the company's more expensive "Art" and "Sport" collections of professional-grade lenses.

I noted earlier that this Sigma 20-200mm lens costs around \$1,000. However, as I write this, it's currently on sale on some sites for \$900. I would always recommend that you use a price tracker to follow any potential large purchases you're considering. Over the years, that approach has saved me several hundred dollars just on cameras and lenses.

As mentioned, this lens is made for cameras with full-frame sensors, so that sets it apart from the cropped-frame APS-C lenses such as the Sigma 16-300mm $f/3.5-6.7$ DC OS zoom lens, which costs around \$770. Those zoom range numbers may look impressive at first glance, but they aren't as remarkable when you account for the cropping factor of the APS-C sensor.



*Sigma 20-200mm F3.5-6.3 DG | Contemporary
Sony a9II
ISO 800, F3.5, 1/100s, 20mm*

There are also a few other full-frame zoom lenses that are in a similar class to this Sigma lens, such as the Tamron 25-200 f/2.8-5.6, which costs around \$900 regularly. As you can note from the numbers, the Tamron lens has a larger maximum aperture, though it doesn't reach as wide of a maximum angle (25mm, as opposed to the Sigma's 20mm) when zoomed all the way out. If you're deciding between these two

lenses, you'd need to consider whether it's more important to have a faster lens that will give you more of that nice background blur, or if you'd rather have a wider angle. Personally, I would probably choose the Sigma lens. Other lenses are faster or zoom out more, to 300mm or even further, but that 20mm wide angle really does distinguish the Sigma from its peers.

If you've been considering adding a high-quality zoom lens to your gear bag, but you want something that's versatile and priced so that you don't need to take out a second mortgage on your house, then this Sigma 20-200mm lens could be just what you're looking for.

It offers one of the widest angles that you'll find on a full-frame zoom lens, it's packaged in a lightweight body, and it's even reasonably priced. Overall, it's an excellent option for photographers who travel a lot and want a capable "all-in-one" zoom lens.

*Sigma 20-200mm F3.5-6.3 DG | Contemporary
Sony a9II
ISO 3200, F5.6, 1/25s, 58mm*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Ryan Sitzman splits his time between the coffee fields of Costa Rica and the mountains of Colorado. You can find him on one of his [several websites](#).

VIDEO YOU NEED THIS SUPERZOOM LENS!! SIGMA 20-200MM REVIEW

by TONY & CHELSEA NORTHRUP



I think I just found it—the ONE lens most photographers should own. The Sigma 20–200mm full-frame superzoom is shockingly versatile: wide enough for tight European streets, wide group shots, and dinner table photos, while still reaching 200mm for sports, portraits, and compressed landscapes. In this review, I’ll show you real-world examples of why this lens stands out from every other “superzoom.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Chelsea and Tony Northrup are photographers based in Connecticut. They are the creators of the top-rated photography book, [“Tony Northrup’s DSLR Book: How to Create Stunning Digital Photography”](#) which features over nine hours of video training and free lifetime updates. To see more of their tutorials and photos you can follow them on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#)

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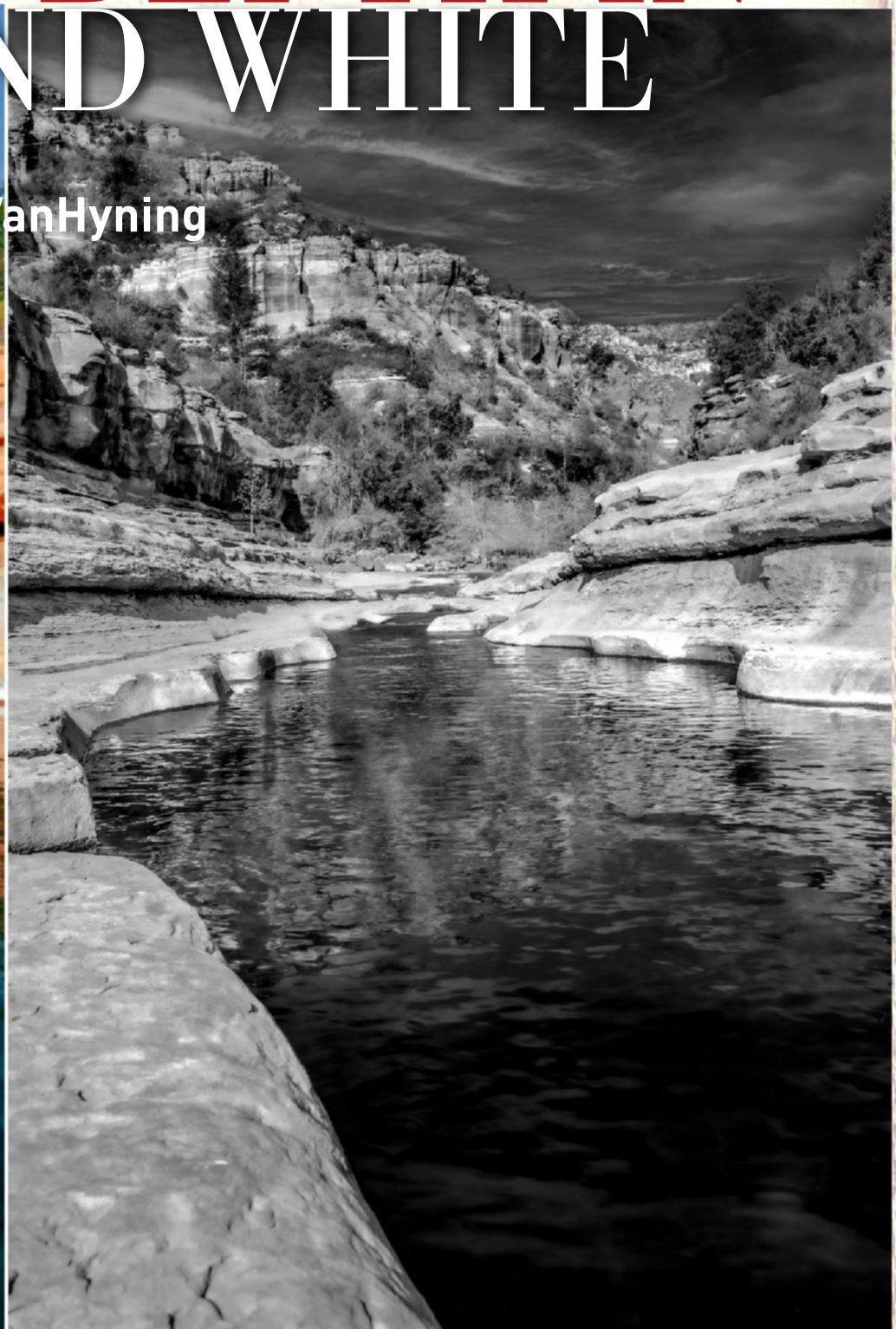
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BUILDING DEPTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

By Craig VanHynning



Photo by: Photo Author



A STRUCTURED LIGHTROOM CLASSIC WORKFLOW FOR
CREATING TONAL DEPTH AND DIMENSIONALITY

Adobe Lightroom Classic is built around a logical editing structure, even if many photographers never fully realize it.

The Develop module is designed to work from the top down, with each adjustment influencing the decisions that follow beneath it.

While Lightroom allows editors to move freely between panels, experienced processing usually follows a deliberate sequence:

- establish tonal balance first;
- refine contrast second;
- and shape detail and depth afterward

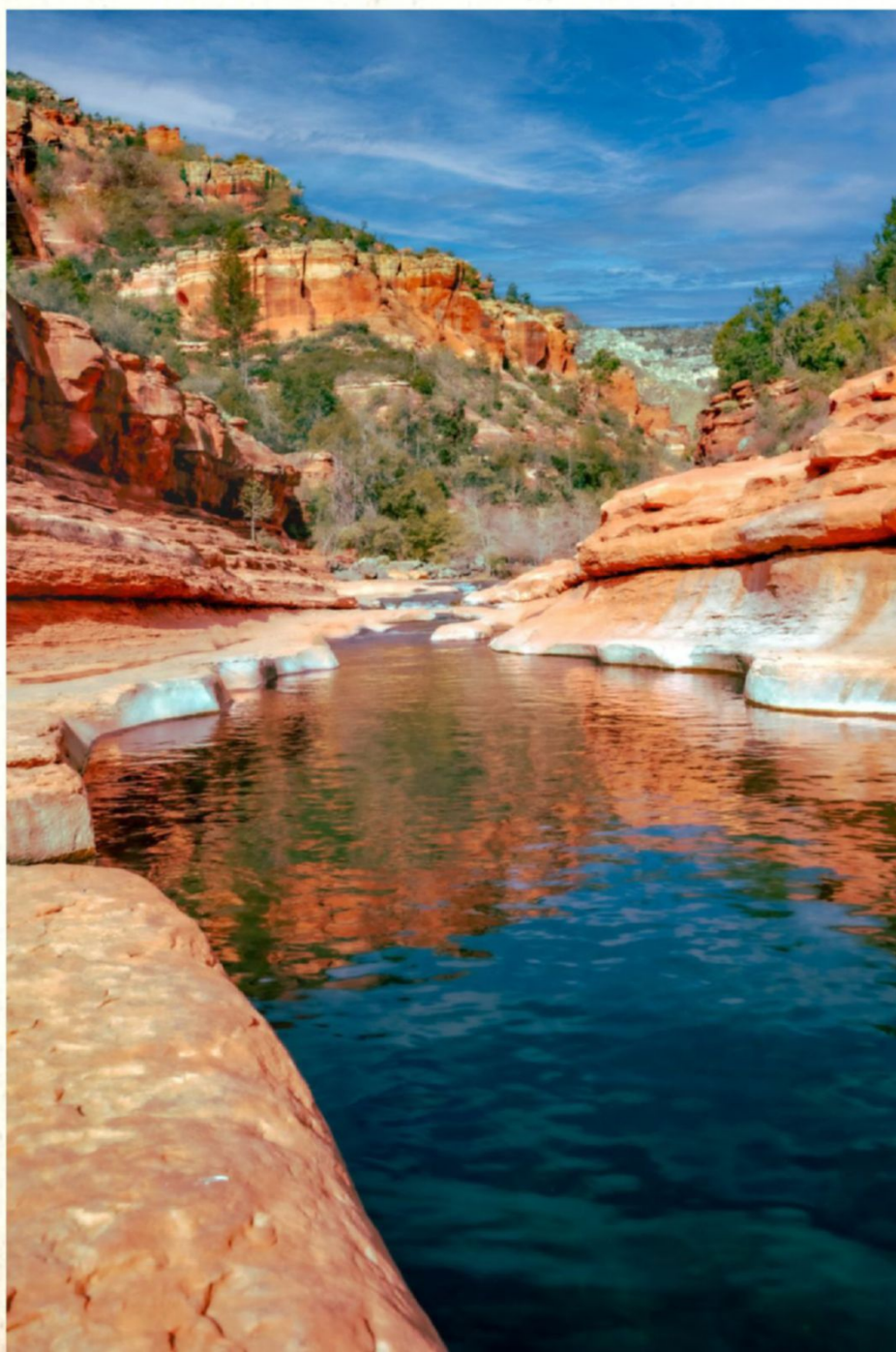
This becomes especially important in black and white photography. Unlike color work, monochrome images rely entirely on tone, contrast, texture, and tonal separation to create depth. Without careful control, black and white images can quickly become flat, muddy, or overly processed.

Strong monochrome photography is not created simply by removing color.

It is built through careful control of brightness relationships, local contrast, texture, and atmosphere. The goal is not dramatic processing for the sake of drama. The goal is to create structure, depth, and realism while guiding the viewer naturally through the frame.

The workflow presented here is designed to establish a clean, repeatable foundation for black and white processing in Lightroom Classic.

It is not intended to force a style onto every image. Instead, it creates a balanced starting point that can be refined for the needs of each individual photograph.



*Original Color Image —
Starting Point*

THE BASIC PANEL: ESTABLISHING TONAL FOUNDATION

Original Color Image — Starting Point.
Workflow example from Lightroom Classic.

The Basic panel controls the overall tonal framework of the image. Exposure, contrast, highlights, shadows, whites, and blacks determine how the photograph will feel before any detailed refinement begins.

THE BASIC PANEL: TONE SECTION

This stage is critical because every adjustment made later depends on the tonal foundation established here. If highlights are too aggressive or

shadows become overly compressed early in the process, later adjustments often become difficult to control.

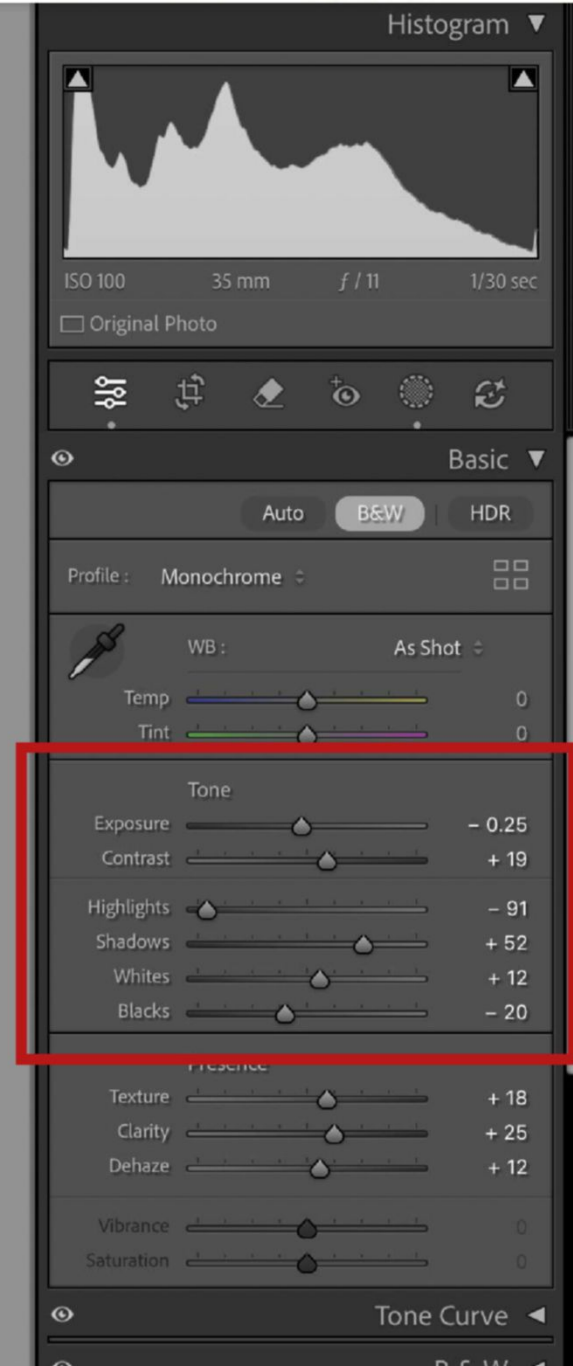
For black and white work, the goal is to create separation and depth without losing natural transitions between light and shadow. A strong tonal foundation should feel balanced and dimensional rather than harsh or artificially dramatic.

Suggested starting values:

- Treatment: Black & White
- Exposure: -0.25
- Contrast: +19
- Highlights: -91
- Shadows: +52
- Whites: +12
- Blacks: -20



*Basic Panel Adjustments -
Tone Section*



These settings open the shadows slightly, protect highlight detail, and establish contrast without crushing tonal information.

THE BASIC PANEL: PRESENCE SECTION

The Presence controls are often where black and white images either gain depth or begin to fall apart. Texture, Clarity, and Dehaze influence midtone contrast and perceived detail, helping create dimensionality and atmosphere.

One of the most common mistakes in monochrome processing is confusing aggressive contrast with real depth. True depth comes from tonal separation and gradual transitions, not from forcing every detail to stand out equally.

Used carefully, these controls help shape structure throughout the frame. Rocks gain texture, clouds develop form, and foreground elements separate more naturally from the background.

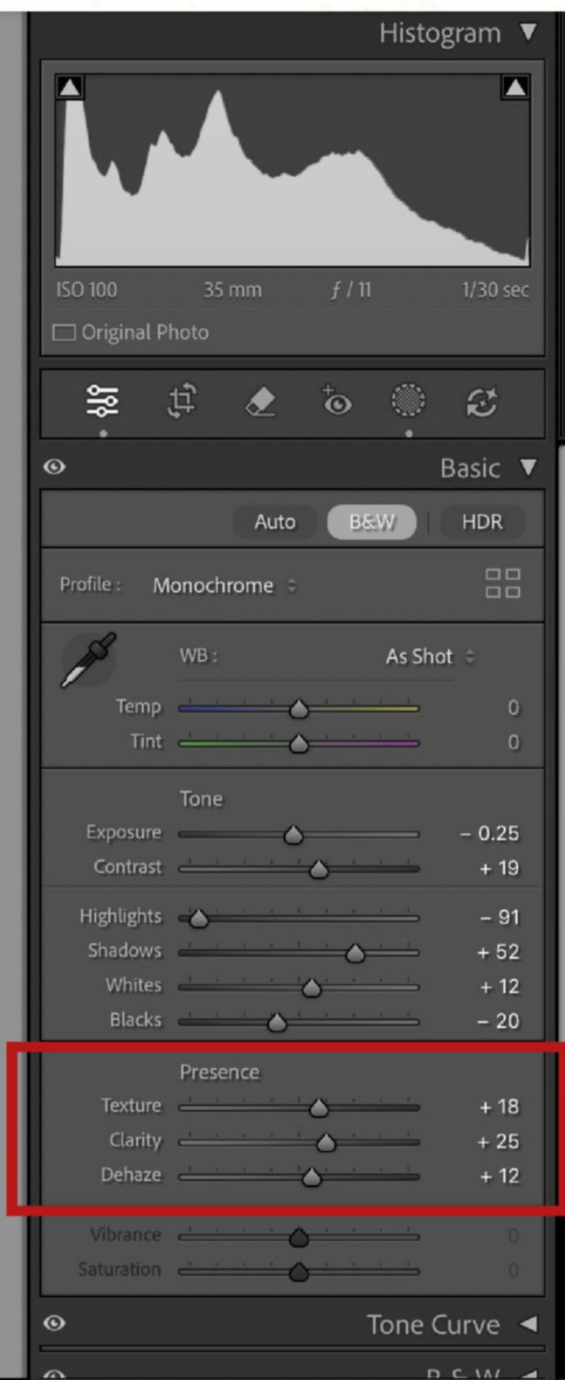
Suggested starting values:

- Texture: +18
- Clarity: +25
- Dehaze: +12

Subtlety matters here. If the viewer notices the processing before noticing the image itself, the adjustments have probably gone too far.

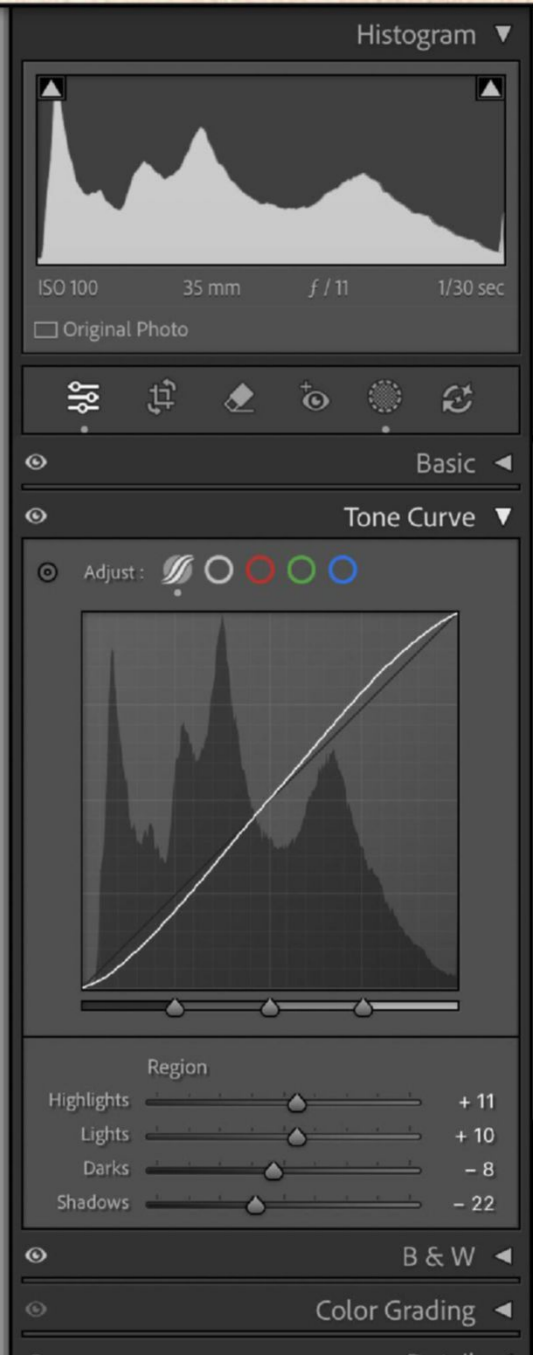


*Basic Panel Adjustments -
Presence Section*





*Tone Curve
Panel Adjustments*



THE PARAMETRIC TONE CURVE: SHAPING CONTRAST

Parametric Tone Curve Adjustments

The Parametric Tone Curve refines overall contrast while maintaining smooth tonal transitions. Rather than adjusting individual points manually, the Parametric Curve controls broad tonal ranges including highlights, lights, darks, and shadows.

A subtle S-curve can deepen an image significantly without sacrificing highlight roll-off or shadow detail.

This is often where black and white photographs begin to feel more dimensional and polished.

Suggested starting values:

- Highlights: +11
- Lights: +10
- Darks: -8
- Shadows: -22

These adjustments gently deepen darker tones while preserving the natural flow between bright and dark areas of the image.

THE BLACK & WHITE MIX: TONAL TRANSLATION

The Black & White Mix panel is arguably the most important part of monochrome conversion because it determines how original colors are translated into shades of gray.

In many ways, this panel replaces the role color once played in separating elements throughout the frame. Blue skies, foliage, rock formations, water, and distant haze all shift tonally depending on how each color channel is interpreted.

A bright blue sky may appear flat in black and white unless the blue luminance is

reduced. Foliage can blend together without tonal separation unless green and yellow values are carefully adjusted.

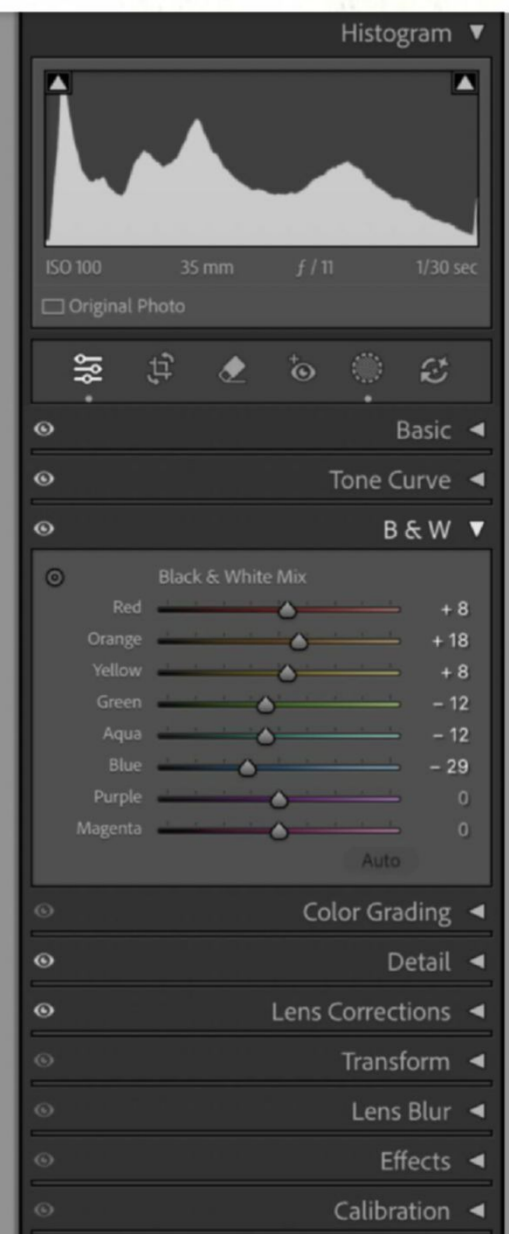
Suggested starting values:

- Red: +8
- Orange: +18
- Yellow: +8
- Green: -12
- Aqua: -12
- Blue: -29
- Purple: 0
- Magenta: 0

The goal is not to force drama into the image, but to create believable tonal separation that supports depth and atmosphere.

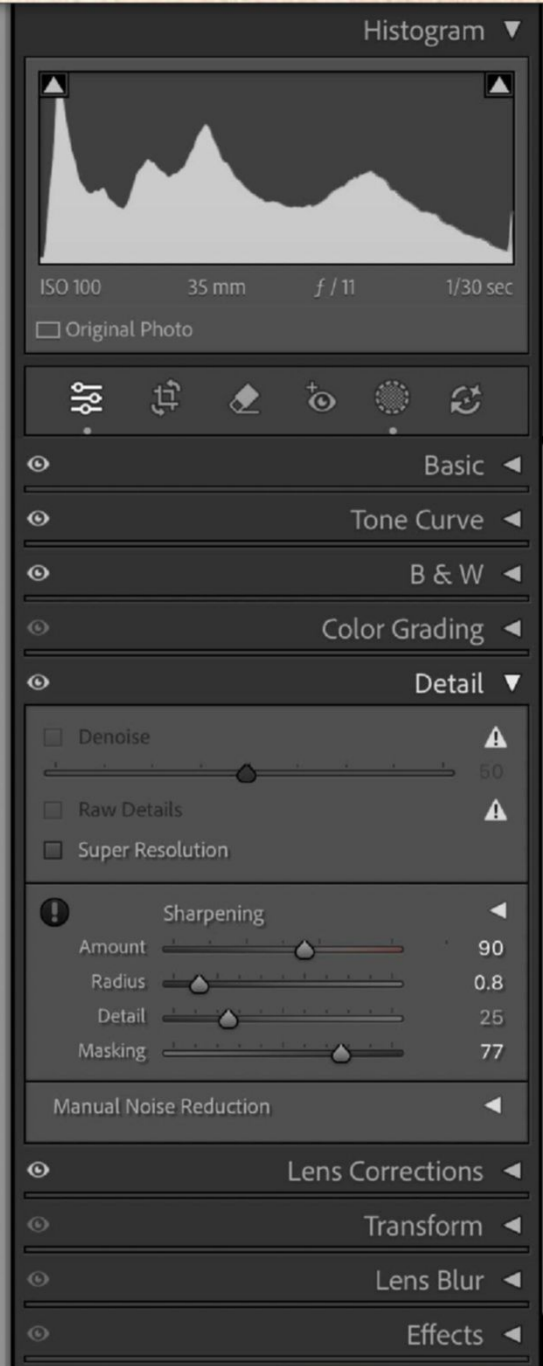


B&W Panel Adjustments





Detail Panel Adjustments



THE DETAIL PANEL: PRECISION SHARPENING

Sharpening in black and white photography should remain controlled and intentional. Over-sharpening can quickly create brittle edges, halos, and artificial texture that become even more noticeable in monochrome work.

Two settings largely define sharpening behavior: Radius and Detail. Radius determines the width of the sharpened edge, while Detail determines how aggressively fine texture is emphasized.

Suggested starting values:

- Amount: 90
- Radius: 0.8
- Detail: 25
- Masking: 77

Holding Option on Mac or Alt on Windows while adjusting the Masking slider allows sharpening to remain concentrated primarily along edges while protecting smoother tonal transitions such as skies and water.

LENS CORRECTIONS: OPTICAL INTEGRITY

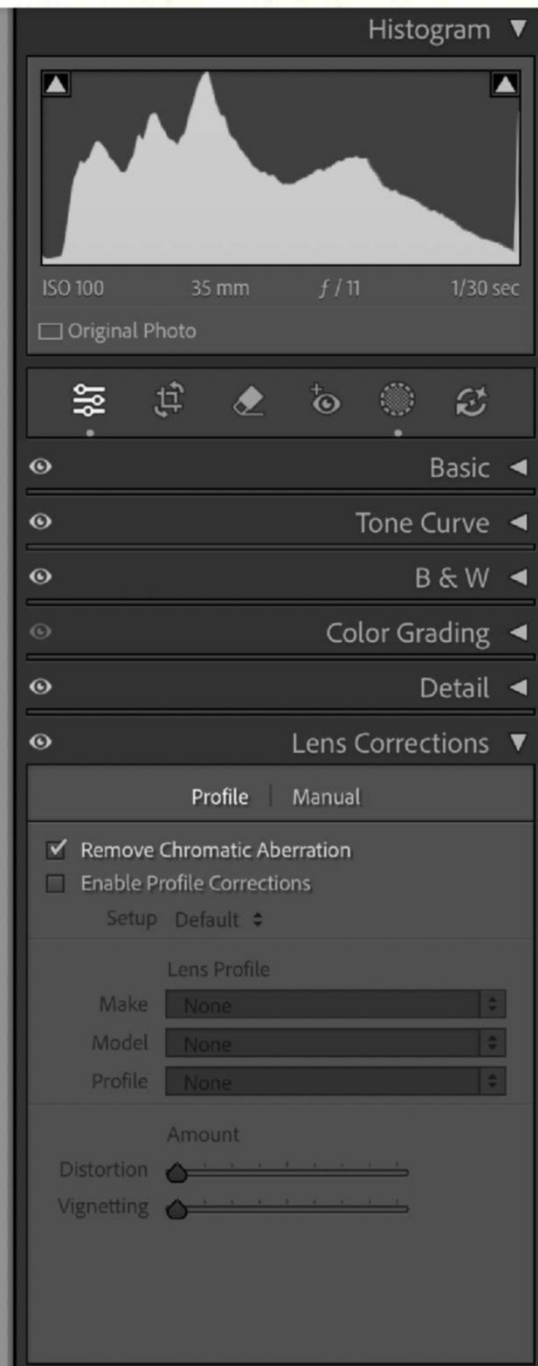
Before finalizing creative decisions, optical issues should be corrected. Lens Corrections help remove distortion, chromatic aberration, and unwanted vignetting introduced by the lens itself.

Correcting these issues early creates cleaner tonal transitions and more accurate geometry throughout the image. It also prevents later adjustments from exaggerating existing lens problems.

This stage is less about artistic interpretation and more about creating a technically clean foundation for the remainder of the workflow.



*Lens Corrections
Panel Adjustments*



DODGING AND BURNING: FINAL SCULPTING

Dodging and burning are where many black and white photographs truly come to life. Rather than altering the image globally, these adjustments guide the viewer through the frame by selectively darkening or brightening specific areas.

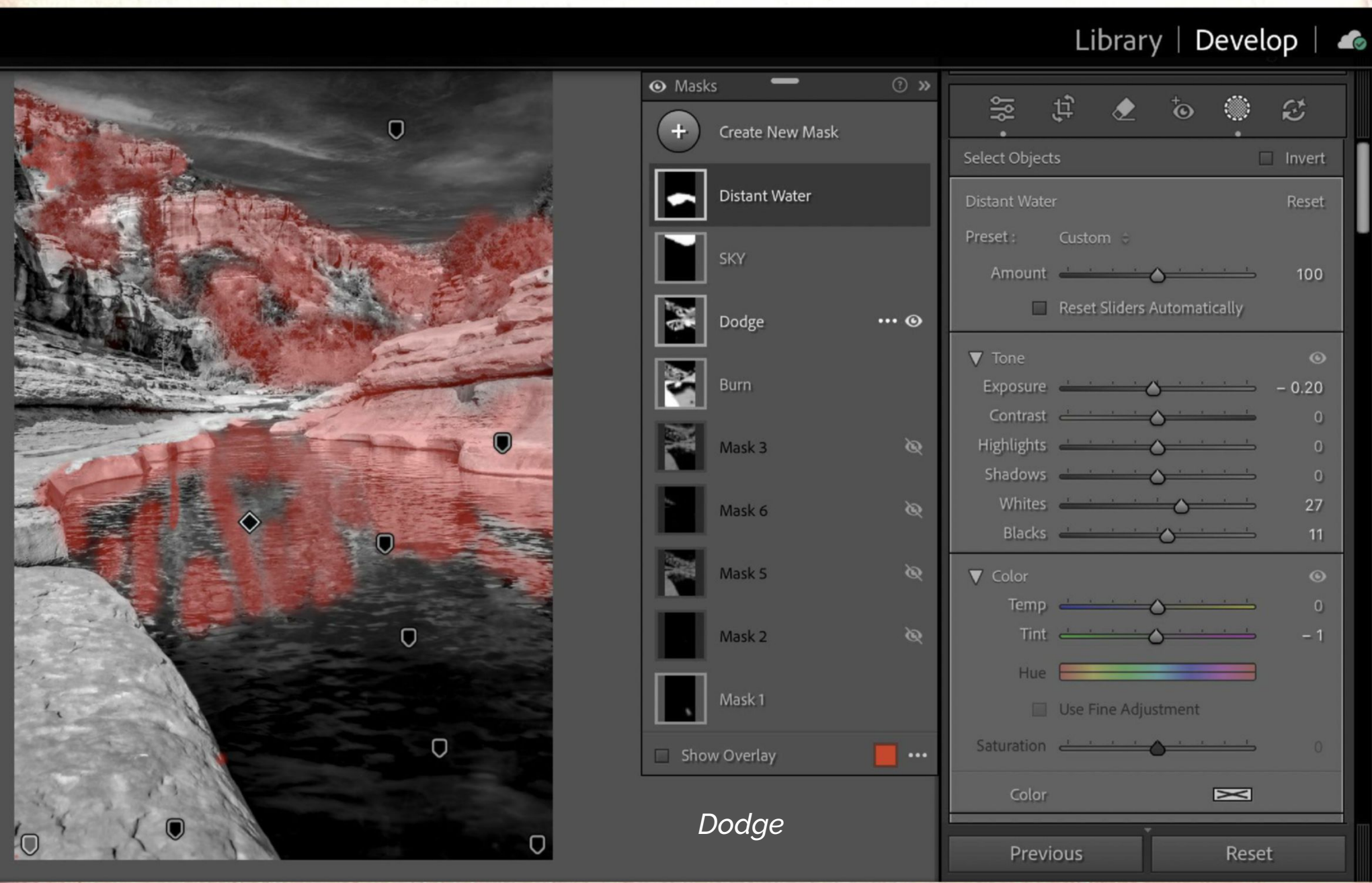
Burning deepens areas that feel too bright or distracting. Dodging subtly lifts important details and helps establish visual flow throughout the composition.

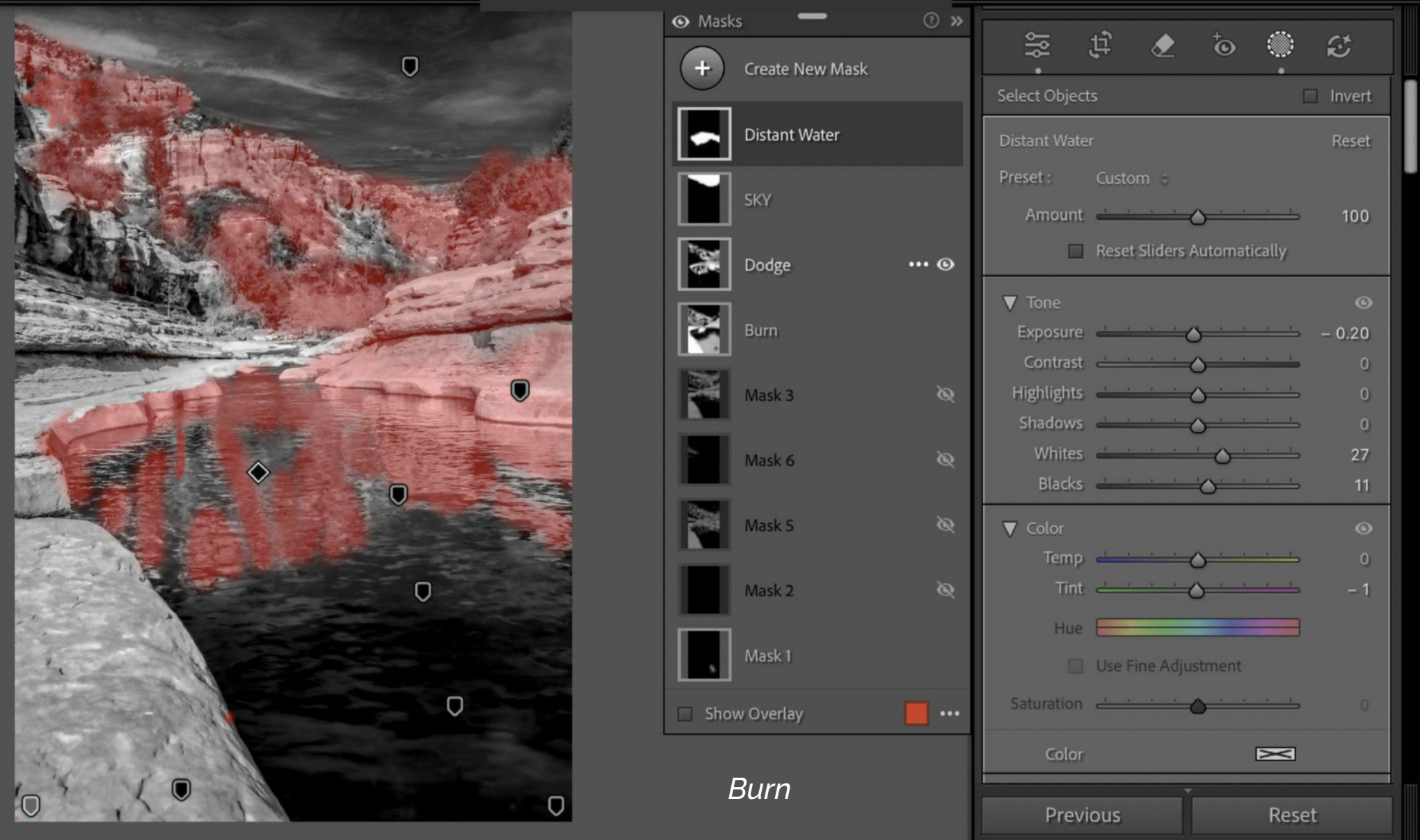
The key is restraint. Dodging and burning should shape the image quietly. The viewer should feel the added depth and direction without immediately recognizing the edits themselves.

In Lightroom Classic, a single preset containing both dodge and burn masks can streamline this process while still allowing flexibility for individual refinement.

IN CONCLUSION

Black and white photography strips an image down to its essential structure. Without color to guide the





eye, tone, contrast, texture, and light become responsible for carrying the photograph.

Every adjustment becomes more visible in monochrome processing, which is why restraint and control matter so much. Strong black and white images are rarely built through extreme editing. They are built through subtle tonal shaping, careful contrast management, and thoughtful refinement.

Lightroom Classic provides powerful tools for controlling depth and tonal balance, but the software itself does not create the photograph. The photographer's decisions do.

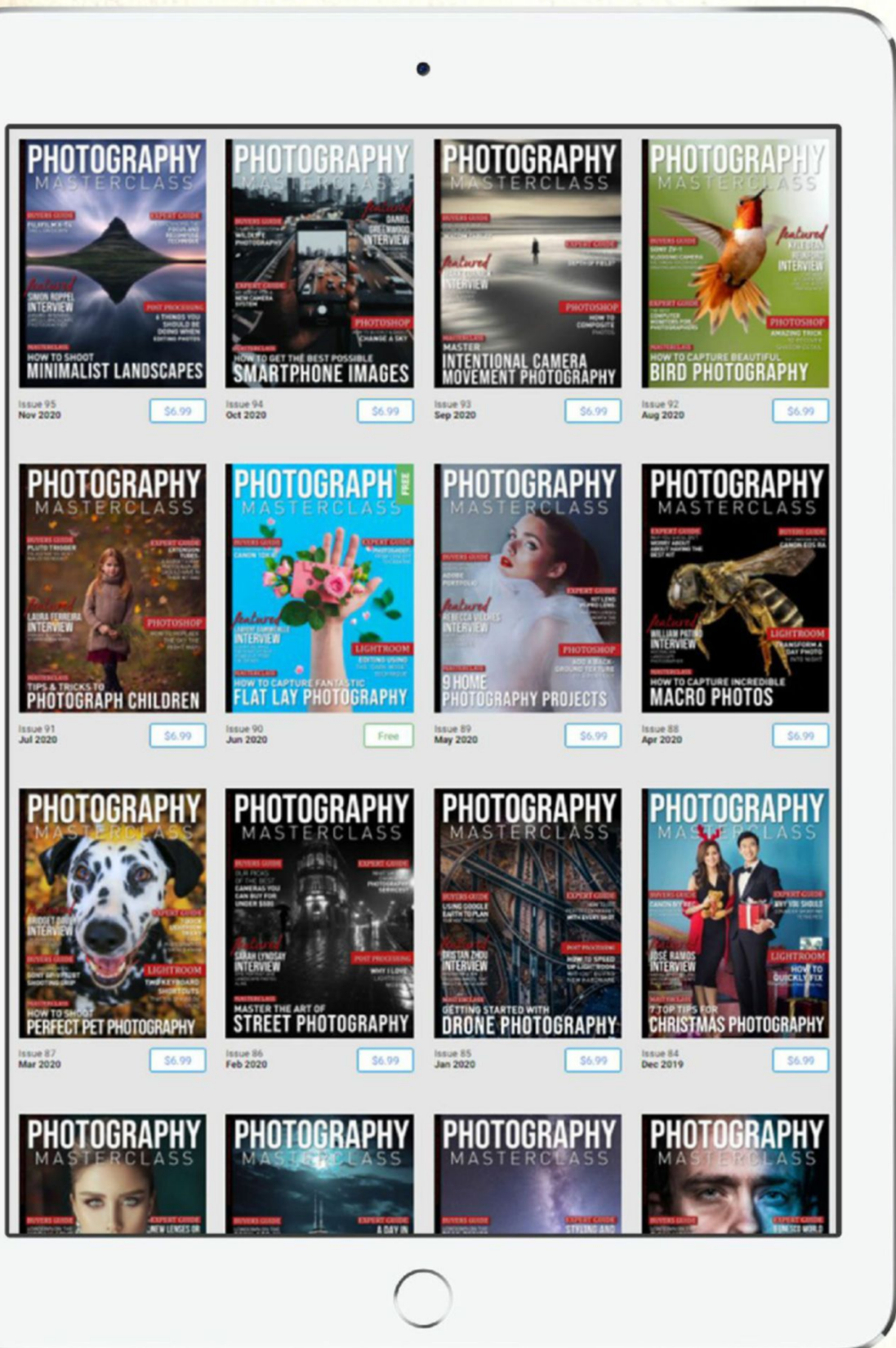
The purpose of this workflow is not to create a one-size-fits-all preset. It is to establish a reliable foundation that supports realism, dimensionality, and atmosphere while leaving room for the individual character of each photograph.

At its best, black and white photography simplifies the image while strengthening its emotional impact. The absence of color removes distraction and places full attention on form, texture, light, and tone. That simplicity is what gives monochrome photography its lasting power.

*Final
Image***ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Craig VanHyning is a landscape photographer based in Arizona whose work focuses on the natural beauty and rugged terrain of the American Southwest. Drawing from more than three decades behind the camera, his photography is shaped by a background in wildland firefighting and emergency medical service, experiences that taught him patience, observation, and respect for the natural world. His work emphasizes realism, tonal depth, and emotional connection through carefully crafted fine-art imagery. More of his work can be viewed on his [website](#)

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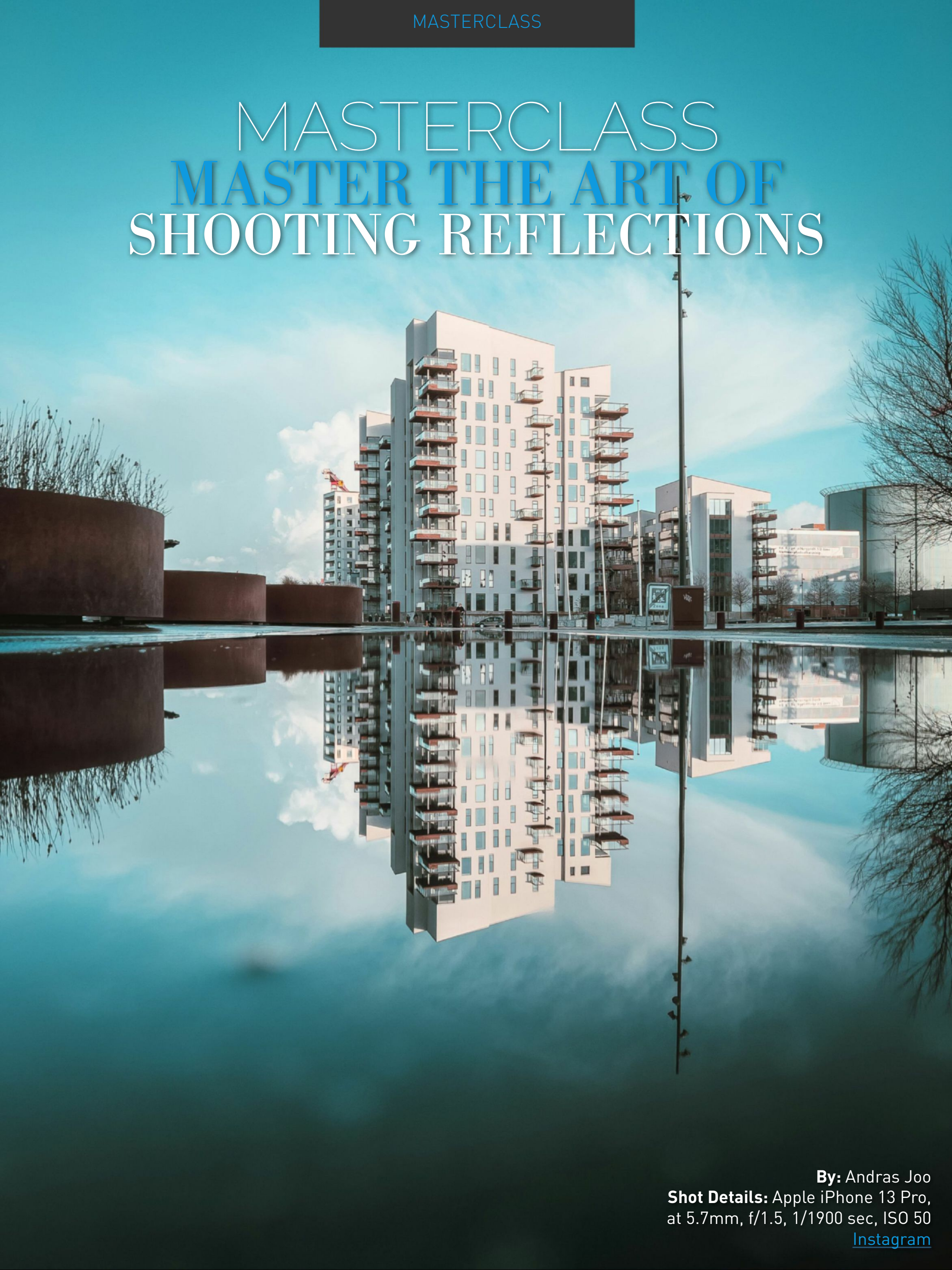
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FIND OUT MORE

MASTERCLASS MASTER THE ART OF SHOOTING REFLECTIONS



By: Andras Joo

Shot Details: Apple iPhone 13 Pro,
at 5.7mm, f/1.5, 1/1900 sec, ISO 50

[Instagram](#)









By: Getty Images
Shot Details: Nikon Z6 II, at 62mm,
f/4.8, 1/800 sec, ISO 160
[Website](#)



By: Jakob Rosen
Shot Details: Canon EOS 80D, at 10mm,
f/3.5, 1/1000 sec, ISO 100
[Instagram](#)







By: Redd Francisco
Shot Details: XSony aVII, at 24mm,
f/2.8, 1/160 sec, ISO 50
[Instagram](#)



MASTER THE ART OF SHOOTING REFLECTIONS



Looking Down to Elevate Your Photography

When confronted with a magnificent piece of architecture, such as a sprawling castle, a towering skyscraper, or a historic monument, our natural instinct as photographers is to look up. We scan the intricate details of the

building, trace the leading lines into the sky, and try to capture the sheer scale of the structure towering above us. But what if the most compelling perspective isn't found by looking up, but by looking down?

Reflections have the power to transform an ordinary architectural shot into a mesmerizing, surreal masterpiece. They add depth, introduce symmetry, and can turn a cluttered scene into a harmonious composition.

However, capturing that perfect, glassy reflection is filled with challenges, from unpredictable weather to compositional pitfalls.

In this masterclass, we will explore the essential techniques, gear choices, and compositional strategies you need to master the art of shooting reflections.

WHY WIND IS THE ENEMY OF REFLECTIONS

The very first obstacle you will encounter when hunting for reflections is wind. Even the slightest breeze can disturb the surface of a lake or pond, replacing a mirror-like finish with a chaotic texture of ripples. When this happens, the reflection is instantly destroyed, and the magic is lost.

So, how do we combat the wind? The most effective strategy is location scouting and being aware of your environment. If you arrive at your chosen location and find the water disturbed by a breeze, it's time to look for alternatives.

Seek out narrower bodies of water, such as small ponds, canals, or sheltered coves. Look for natural windbreaks, like a line of dense trees, a tall hedge, or surrounding buildings that can block the wind from sweeping across the water's surface.

Additionally, timing is everything. Generally, wind speeds are at their lowest during the early morning hours, just before and shortly after sunrise. Not only will you have the best chance of finding calm waters, but you'll also be treated to the soft, directional light of the golden hour.

If the wind picks up, patience is your best friend. Sometimes, waiting just a few minutes for a lull in the breeze is all it takes to get that perfectly flat, glassy surface.





SYMMETRY AND ANGLES

When it comes to composing a reflection shot, traditional rules of photography often take a back seat. While the rule of thirds is a foundational principle for most landscapes, reflections beg for absolute symmetry.

To maximize the impact of a reflection, try placing the intersection line (where the actual subject meets its mirrored counterpart) dead center in your frame. This 50/50 split creates a powerful, visually arresting balance that draws the viewer's eye back and forth between reality and illusion.

However, finding the right angle to capture this symmetry can be tricky, depending on

the distance of your subject. This is where understanding the physics of reflection pays off. If your subject is far away in the distance, you will quickly notice that shooting from a standing height cuts off much of the reflection.

To solve this, you need to get low. By lowering your tripod and bringing your camera closer to the surface of the water, the angle of incidence changes, allowing the distant reflection to stretch out and fill more of your foreground.

Conversely, if your subject is very close to you, you may actually need to raise your camera higher to capture the full reflection. Always be prepared to adjust your physical height to maximize the mirrored image.

LENS CHOICE AND COMPRESSION

Your choice of lens will drastically alter the mood and impact of your reflection photography. It is tempting to default to an ultra-wide-angle lens (like a 16mm or 24mm) to capture as much of the scene as possible. While wide angles are great for sweeping landscapes, they have a critical drawback as they push the subject away, rendering a grand castle or distant building as a tiny, insignificant element in the middle of your frame.

Instead, try reaching for a short telephoto lens, such as a 70mm. A telephoto lens compresses the scene, pulling the distant architecture closer and making it appear much larger and more noticeable in the frame.

This compression not only emphasizes the main subject but also creates a tighter, more intimate relationship between the structure and its reflection. Don't be afraid to zoom in and focus on a specific, compelling section of the architecture rather than trying to fit the entire landscape into a single shot.

NAILING FOCUS AND EXPOSURE

Achieving sharpness across the entire frame, from the closest ripple in the water to the farthest turret of a castle, is the hallmark of professional reflection photography. Typically, you will want to shoot at a mid-range aperture, somewhere between $f/7$ and $f/11$, to ensure a deep depth of field while maintaining lens sharpness.

But what happens when your foreground reflection is just inches from your lens, and your main subject is hundreds of feet away? In these situations, even $f/11$ might not provide enough depth of field to keep both elements tack sharp. The solution is focus stacking.

Focus stacking is a technique where you take multiple exposures of the exact same scene, changing only the focal point. To do this, lock your camera down firmly on a sturdy tripod. Take your first shot focused directly on the architectural subject in the distance. Check your histogram to ensure a proper exposure (ideally, all your tones should fit neatly between the shadows and highlights). Then, without moving the camera, adjust your focus to the reflection in the immediate foreground and take a second shot.

Later, in post-processing software like Adobe Photoshop, you can layer these two images on top of one another. By using a simple layer mask and placing a smooth gradient between the top half and bottom half of the image, you can seamlessly blend the two shots together, resulting in a final image that is flawlessly sharp from front to back.

A CRITICAL WARNING ON FOCUS STACKING

When shooting your multiple exposures, you must pay extreme attention to your surroundings. If there are people walking through your frame, birds flying by, or boats moving on the water, you must wait for them to clear out. If a person is present in your subject-focused shot but absent (or in a different position) in your reflection-focused shot, the final blended image will look fake and messy. Patience and timing are vital to ensure both frames are identical in content.

AVOIDING COMMON COMPOSITIONAL MISTAKES

When we are struck by the beauty of a reflection, it's easy to develop tunnel vision and forget our basic compositional checks. One of the most common mistakes beginners make is focusing entirely on getting the top of the building perfectly framed, only to realize later that they've chopped off the bottom of the reflection, or vice versa.

Remember, when shooting a reflection, your subject is essentially double its normal size. You must ensure you leave enough breathing room at both the top and bottom of the frame so that neither

the actual structure nor its mirrored counterpart is uncomfortably cropped.

Remember reality is rarely perfect. You will often encounter visual clutter, for example, an ugly construction wrap, a bright orange crane, or distracting street signs. Instead of giving up, use your composition to hide these flaws.

Sometimes, moving your tripod just a few feet to the left or right can completely obscure a construction site behind a closer, more appealing tower. You can also utilize natural foreground elements, like overhanging tree branches or reeds on the water's edge, to frame your shot and block out unwanted background clutter.





SILHOUETTES AND THE BLUE HOUR

Finally, the impact of your reflection shot will ultimately rely on the quality of light. Reflections are highly dependent on contrast and color.

If you are dealing with a bright, washed-out sky or a subject that is heavily backlit, consider embracing a silhouette. By exposing for the bright sky and letting the architecture fall into complete darkness, you create a striking, graphic image. This technique is also a fantastic way to hide ugly details, like scaffolding or construction, since all surface details are lost in the shadows.

However, the true magic of reflection photography often happens after the sun goes down. Do not pack up your gear too early! Stay through the sunset and well into the blue hour. As the ambient daylight fades, artificial lights on the buildings will begin to switch on. The warm, golden glow of streetlamps and window lights reflecting on the deep blue water creates

a stunning color contrast that elevates the mood of the entire image.

Look for where the light is hitting and where the colors are most vibrant, and don't be afraid to break symmetry to include a beautiful swath of sunset color on one side of the frame.

IN CONCLUSION

Shooting architectural reflections is a rewarding pursuit that forces you to slow down, analyze your environment, and see the world in a different way.

By planning for the wind, embracing symmetry, utilizing lens compression, and mastering focus stacking, you can overcome the technical hurdles and capture images that are truly breathtaking. So next time you find yourself standing before a grand structure, resist the urge to immediately look up. Look down, refine your composition, and wait for the light. The perfect mirror image is waiting for you.

VIDEO TUTORIAL: FRAMING REFLECTIONS THAT ACTUALLY STOP THE SCROLL

by Adorama With Peter Dam



In this video I share how you can capture amazing reflections. I'm attempting this at a historic Danish castle. The photographic pursuit reveals an unforeseen challenge, demanding emphasis on composition and framing to overcome. Join me as I navigate these difficulties in pursuit of the perfect reflection shot. Peter Bredahl Dam is a professional nature photographer with over 10 years of experience in wildlife, landscape and macro photography.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Shop [Adorama](#) for a powerhouse lineup of cameras, lenses, cinematography gear, studio lighting, tripods, pro audio, computers, printers, and every cutting-edge accessory you need to manifest your creative vision.

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We want to see your own masterclass shots! If you've put the techniques from this issue to the test, share your results with us. Share them on our Readers Facebook Group for a chance to be featured. We can't wait to see your stunning shots!

#PhotographyMasterclassMagazine



FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER: ELISA MILLER



From modelling in front of the camera to crafting surreal narratives behind it, self-taught photographer Elisa Miller has established a remarkably distinct voice in fine art portraiture. Now based in the UK, the French-born artist uses rich colour, meticulous set design, and cinematic lighting to explore the layered complexities of identity and self-perception in womanhood. Operating like lingering frames from an imaginary film, Elisa's dream-like images celebrate visual beauty while holding a compelling tension just beneath the surface. Here, we explore her creative process, her transition into photography, and the philosophies that guide her striking visual storytelling. In this interview, Elisa discussed her creative process, her transition into photography, and the philosophies that guide her striking visual storytelling.



Photographic Speciality/Style:

Cinematic fine art portrait photography exploring womanhood, identity, and self-perception through surreal narratives, rich colour, and carefully constructed visual worlds.

Short Bio:

I am a self-taught fine art photographer originally from France and currently based in the UK. My work focuses largely on identity, femininity, self-image, and the emotional complexity of womanhood,

using cinematic storytelling to examine the contrast between appearance and inner reality.

Alongside photography, I have a background in graphic design, which has strongly influenced my use of colour, styling, and composition. Over the past few years, my work has received international recognition through awards, exhibitions, and publications, and I continue to develop personal projects that combine visual storytelling with psychological and social themes.







You began your creative career as a model in front of the camera before moving behind the camera in 2017. How did your love of photography begin, and what inspired that transition?

My love of photography really began while I was modelling. Being in front of the camera gave me an awareness of how images can shape identity, confidence, and perception, especially for women. I became fascinated not only by the final image itself, but by the psychology behind it. I was constantly observing how photographers directed emotion, how styling changed the narrative, and how much power existed in the smallest visual decisions.

Over time, I realised I was becoming more interested in creating the image than being inside it. I started experimenting with fashion and portraiture, initially as a personal creative outlet rather than a career plan. Photography quickly became a way for me to process emotions and ideas that I found difficult to express verbally.

The transition behind the camera felt very natural because I already understood what it felt like to be vulnerable in front of one. What began as curiosity eventually became something much deeper: a need to tell stories visually and explore themes that felt personally meaningful to me.



Your images explore identity, self-perception and womanhood through a colourful, cinematic lens. Where does your creative inspiration come from?

A lot of my inspiration comes from psychology, cinema, literature, and personal experience. I am very interested in the internal worlds people carry beneath the surface and the tension between how we present ourselves and how we actually feel. Many of my projects begin with an emotional question rather than a visual one.

I am particularly inspired by the representation of women in media and the subtle ways society shapes female identity from childhood onwards. I often explore themes such as self-worth, performance, beauty, vulnerability, nostalgia, and emotional conditioning.

These ideas naturally find their way into my visual language.

Visually, I draw inspiration from classic cinema, vintage aesthetics, surrealism and colour theory. I love images that feel beautiful at first glance but contain a sense of unease or contradiction underneath. Directors such as David Lynch, Alfred Hitchcock, and Stanley Kubrick have all influenced me in different ways, as have surrealist painters and mid-century visual culture.

I also think memory plays a large role in my work. Many of my images are rooted in feelings or fragments of experiences rather than literal narratives. I am interested in creating photographs that feel emotionally familiar, almost like scenes from a dream or a memory that cannot be fully explained.







Your work has a very distinctive atmosphere and visual language. Can you describe your typical creative process from the first idea through to the finished image?

Thank you! My process usually begins with a concept or emotional theme rather than a fully formed visual idea. I spend a lot of time thinking, researching, writing notes, collecting references, and building mood boards before I even pick up the camera. Sometimes inspiration comes from a film, a piece of music, a colour palette, or even a sentence in a book.

Once the core idea feels clear emotionally, I start developing the visual world around it. Styling, colour, props, location, and lighting all become part of the storytelling process. Because my work is highly cinematic, I approach

many shoots almost like creating a still frame from an imaginary film. Every detail is considered carefully because I want the image to communicate something beyond aesthetics alone.

On shoot days, I usually work with a solid plan. I create storyboards and know what images I want to capture. My experience as a former model also helps me direct subjects in a way that feels collaborative and emotionally connected rather than overly technical.

Post-production is a very important part of my process as well. Editing is where the atmosphere really comes together. I spend a great deal of time refining colour, tone, texture to create the final emotional feeling I want the image to hold. I see retouching less as correction and more as an extension of storytelling.



Your photography often highlights the tension between appearance and reality, especially in the way women are seen and how they see themselves. What draws you to these themes?

I think these themes emerged naturally from my own experiences as a woman and from years of observing how much pressure exists around performance, beauty, and identity. There is often a large gap between external appearance and internal reality, particularly for women who are taught very early to prioritise how they are perceived.

Social media and visual culture have amplified this even further. We live in a world where images are constantly shaping ideas of worth, femininity, success, and desirability, yet many

people feel increasingly disconnected from themselves underneath those performances. I find that tension deeply interesting artistically and psychologically.

My work is not intended as criticism of femininity or beauty itself. In many ways, I celebrate beauty and aesthetics. What interests me is the emotional complexity underneath them: the vulnerability, contradictions, insecurities, and invisible expectations that often coexist with outward perfection.

Photography allows me to explore these ideas in a symbolic and emotionally layered way. I want viewers to feel something beyond simply "looking" at an image. Ideally, I want them to recognise parts of themselves within the work, even if they cannot fully explain why.







You've developed a self-taught practice that has gained international recognition. What were some of the most important moments or decisions that helped shape your photographic voice?

One of the most important decisions I made was allowing myself to not chase trends and instead focus on work that felt emotionally honest to me. Early on, I think many creatives feel pressure to create what is commercially popular or socially validated, but my work became much stronger once I leaned fully into the themes and aesthetics I genuinely cared about.

Another defining moment was beginning personal conceptual projects rather than client-based work. Personal projects allowed me to experiment, fail, refine ideas, and discover recurring themes in

my work. That process helped me develop a more recognisable visual identity over time.

Being self-taught also forced me to become resourceful and observant. I learned through experimentation, analysing films and paintings, making mistakes, and constantly studying light, colour, and composition. In some ways, not having formal training gave me freedom to approach photography more intuitively.

Receiving recognition through awards and publications was obviously encouraging, but I think the biggest shift internally was realising that my work connected with people emotionally. When viewers began responding not only to the aesthetics but to the underlying themes, it gave me confidence to continue exploring deeper and more personal narratives.

You've received numerous awards and nominations over the past few years. What would you consider to be your greatest achievement in photography to date, and why?

For me, the greatest achievement has been building a body of work that feels genuinely personal while still resonating with people internationally. Awards and publications are incredibly meaningful, especially as a self-taught photographer, because they represent recognition from the industry. However, the moments that stay with me most are often the personal messages from viewers who feel emotionally connected to the work.

I think creating art that makes people feel seen is one of the most rewarding aspects of photography. When someone tells me that an image articulated an emotion they could never quite explain themselves, that means a lot.

Professionally, I am also proud of having developed a distinctive visual identity in

such a saturated industry. In a time where trends move very quickly and imagery is consumed constantly, maintaining a strong artistic voice feels important to me.

Do you have one favourite photograph you've taken or one that feels especially meaningful to you? If so, what makes it your favourite?

I find it very difficult to choose a single favourite because each project tends to represent a different emotional period or personal question in my life. However, the images that stay with me most are usually the ones created during moments of emotional vulnerability or transformation.

I also think favourite images change over time. As I evolve personally and creatively, different works begin to hold different meanings. Photography feels almost like a visual diary to me, so looking back at older images often reminds me not only of creative ideas but of who I was emotionally at that time.







What is your long-term photographic ambition, and what would you still love to achieve in the years ahead?

Long-term, I would love to continue building larger conceptual series that combine photography with deeper psychological and social storytelling. I am very interested in creating work that exists beyond individual images and instead forms immersive visual narratives.

Publishing a fine art photography book is something I would love to achieve in the future, particularly around themes of femininity, identity, and perception.

Ultimately, my ambition is not simply to create aesthetically beautiful work, but to create images that leave a lasting emotional impression. I want my photography to continue evolving conceptually and artistically while remaining emotionally honest at its core.

What's inside your kit bag at the moment, and what's the one piece of kit you couldn't do without?

At the moment, my kit is relatively simple because I tend to prioritise atmosphere, light, and storytelling over having excessive equipment. I usually work with a full frame camera body, a small selection of prime lenses, 3 strobe lights, and a large amount of styling and set props that probably take up as much space as the actual camera gear.

I also rely heavily on colour references, mood boards, fabrics, props, and creative planning tools because so much of my work is concept-driven.

The one piece of kit I probably could not do without would be my flashes. I love how controlling the light allows me to create intimacy and cinematic depth within an image. For me, it's the light that shapes the emotional state of the image.

If you could put together your dream kit bag with no limitations, what would it include?

I would probably invest in a wider range of high-end cinema-inspired lighting equipment that would allow me to push the cinematic side of my work even further. I am very interested in creating images that blur the line between photography and film stills, so equipment that enhances atmosphere and texture would be especially exciting to experiment with.

I would also love access to larger production resources such as elaborate set design, new locations abroad, and

more advanced lighting setups. In many ways, the dream is less about owning endless gear and more about having the freedom to build immersive visual worlds without practical limitations.

That said, I genuinely believe creativity matters far more than equipment. Some of my favourite images were created with very limited resources, like my self-portrait *Contact (Lost)*. It was made using just two flashes, my old Nikon camera, a rug, and a vintage telephone in my living room. Vision and emotional connection will always be more important than having the most expensive camera.







What advice would you give to beginners who are just starting to develop their own style and confidence as photographers?

I would encourage beginners to spend less time comparing themselves to others and more time understanding what genuinely moves them emotionally and visually. Style develops naturally over time through repetition, curiosity, experimentation, and personal experience. It cannot really be forced.

I also think it is important to create personal work alongside commercial or trend-driven work. Personal projects are often where your real artistic voice begins to emerge because you

are creating from instinct rather than external validation.

Do not be afraid of making imperfect work. Some of the most important creative breakthroughs come through experimentation and failure. Confidence is built through doing, not through waiting until you feel ready.

Finally, I would encourage photographers to look beyond photography itself for inspiration. Films, paintings, literature, psychology, music, and life experiences all shape artistic perspective. The strongest visual voices usually come from people who are expressing something deeper than technical skill alone.



TIMELAPSE

WILLEMSTAD, CURACAO - A COLORFUL CARIBBEAN PARADISE

by LITTLE BIG WORLD



Watch Willemstad shrink to toy-town scale in this mesmerising timelapse video, where Joerg Daiber's tilt-shift lens turns Curaçao's UNESCO-listed harbour city into a miniature Caribbean playground.

BEHIND THE SCENES: JOERG DAIBER'S “WILLEMSTAD, CURACAO - A COLORFUL CARIBBEAN PARADISE”



A while back I was lucky enough to be invited by the Curaçao Tourism Board to explore this beautiful Caribbean island which made the sensational qualification for the World Cup recently.

Curaçao is an island country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Willemstad is the capital and largest city of Curaçao.

The city centre, with its unique architecture and harbour entry, has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

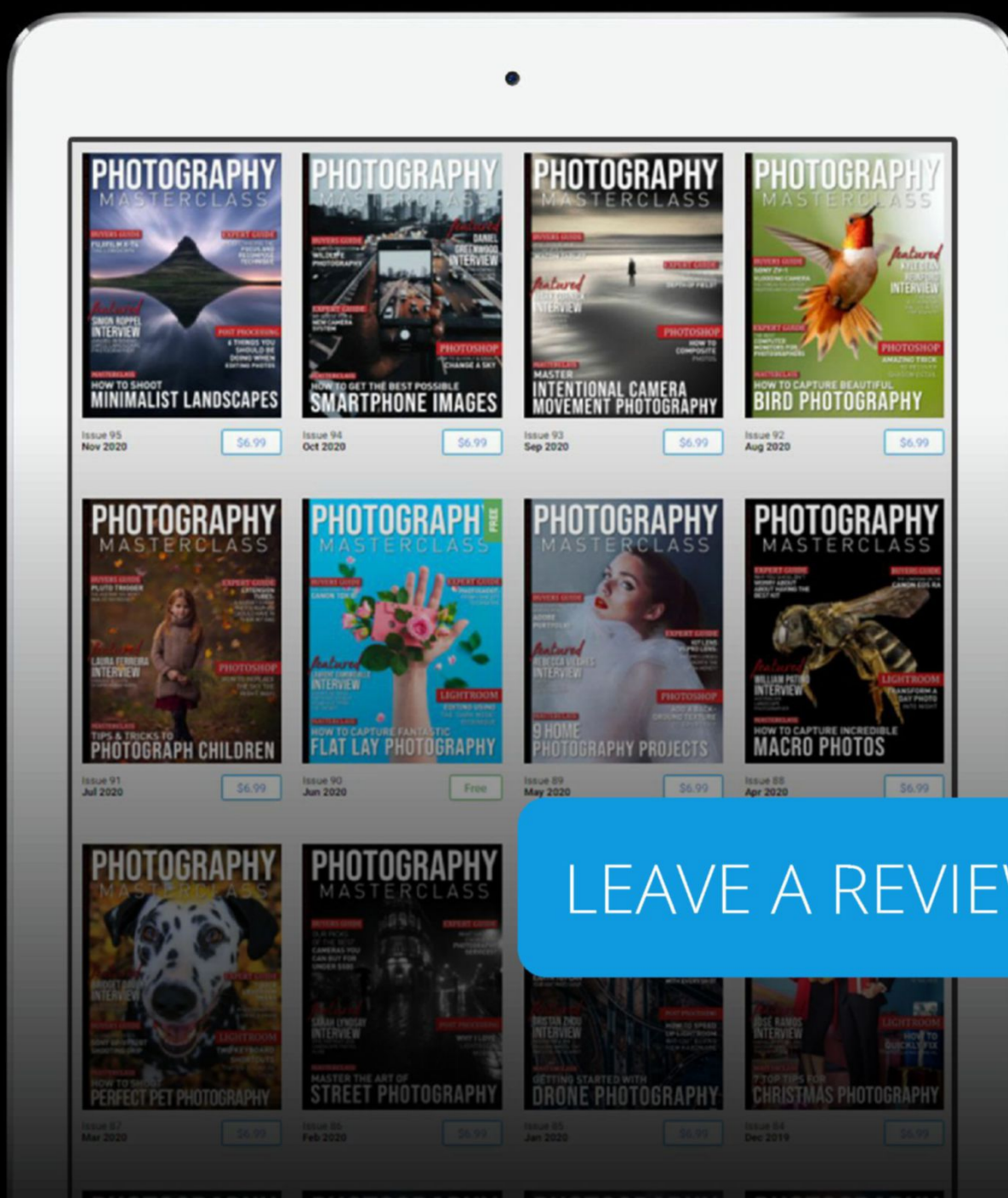
Tilt-shift turns Willemstad into whimsy, showcasing sun-soaked streets and Caribbean colonial cuteness amid FIFA tournament thrill. Tiny boats bob, pastel facades pop, and island energy.

Many thanks to CTB and Bright8 for making this episode possible.

Follow more from Joerge Daiber on his [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Vimeo](#)

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THE MYSTIC SKYLINE

By: Rajesh Dhar

Shot Details: Nikon D750, at 24mm,
f/5.6, 1/640 sec, ISO 800

[Instagram](#)



SHOULDERING INDIA

By: Rajesh Dhar

Shot Details: Canon 7D, at 10mm,
f/8, 1/250 sec, ISO 100

[Instagram](#)



MORNING GLORY

By: Rajesh Dhar

Shot Details: Nikon D750,
at 24mm, f/4, 1/800 sec, ISO 125

[Instagram](#)



VEDIC GURUKUL

By: Rajesh Dhar

Shot Details: Nikon D90, at 18mm,
f/4.5, 1/80 sec, ISO 800, -1.3 EV

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SKYHAWKS PARACHUTE TEAM

By: Lou Fasullo

Shot Details: Sony A6700, with 200–600mm lens,
at f/6.3, 1/1200sec, ISO 250

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FIND OUT MORE

THE TRUTH ABOUT TELECONVERTORS



How To Get Closer Without Breaking the Bank

Canon EF 2x III Extender

As a photographer, there is a very specific kind of heart-break that happens when you spot the perfect shot, but your gear just won't let you capture it. You might be out in nature and suddenly spot an osprey diving for a fish, or you might be standing

on the sidelines of a fast-paced sporting event watching the play unfold. You bring your camera to your eye, zoom your lens all the way out, and realize your subject is still just a tiny speck in the middle of the frame.



Nikon Z Teleconverter TC 1.4x JMA903DA

You can try to salvage the image later by cropping heavily in post-production, but we all know what happens - the resolution plummets, the details turn to mush, and the magic of that split-second moment is lost forever.

The obvious and most heavily marketed solution is to simply invest in a massive, dedicated super-telephoto lens. But a quick glance at the staggering price tags attached to premium 400mm or 600mm prime lenses is enough to make any sane photographer wince. Wildlife and sports photography are incredibly expensive genres to break into.

Enter the teleconverter, which is a powerful, compact, and widely misunderstood tool that can fundamentally transform the gear you already have sitting in your bag. If you have been on the fence about

whether to add a teleconverter to your photography kit, this comprehensive guide will break down what they are, the real-world pros and cons, and how to get the absolute most out of them in the field.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A TELECONVERTER?

A teleconverter, which is sometimes referred to as an extender depending on the camera brand, is a small, specialized optical device that mounts directly between your camera body and your primary lens. Its sole purpose is to magnify the center of the image circle produced by your lens, effectively increasing your focal length.

They typically come in three standard magnifications: 1.4x, 1.7x, and 2.0x.

To understand the impact, let's look at the math. If you pair a 1.4x teleconverter with a classic, workhorse 70-200mm lens, your new focal range instantly becomes 98-280mm.

If you decide to attach a 2.0x teleconverter to that exact same 70-200mm lens, you are suddenly shooting at 140-400mm. Just like that, a versatile portrait and event lens has doubled its reach and become a highly capable setup for wildlife, aviation, and sports photography.

For the truly ambitious, adding a 2.0x teleconverter to a 600mm prime lens gives you an astonishing 1200mm of reach. This allows you to fill the frame with subjects that are incredibly far away, offering a perspective that most photographers rarely get to experience.

THE PROS - WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER ONE

1. MASSIVE COST SAVINGS

The single most compelling reason to buy a teleconverter is the price. A brand-new, high-quality teleconverter typically costs between \$400 and \$600, and you can often find them for even less on the used market. Compare that modest investment to the thousands—or sometimes tens of thousands—of dollars required to purchase a fast super-telephoto prime lens. For photographers who want to dip their toes into wildlife or sports photography without committing to a second mortgage, a teleconverter is the perfect gateway.

Canon EF 1.4x III Extender



2. SIZE, WEIGHT, AND SUPREME PORTABILITY

Super-telephoto lenses are notoriously heavy, bulky, and difficult to travel with. If you are hiking up a mountain, flying on a commercial airline, or simply walking around a city all day, carrying a massive 600mm lens is often entirely impractical. A teleconverter, on the other hand, is remarkably small and lightweight. It can easily slip right into the pocket of your camera bag or jacket. It gives you the luxurious option to extend your reach on a whim without taking up precious space or exhausting your arms.

3. UNMATCHED VERSATILITY

A teleconverter maximizes the utility of the lenses you have already invested in. Imagine you are shooting an outdoor wedding, a landscape, or a portrait session with a 70-200mm lens. If you suddenly spot a compelling wildlife scene in the distance (like a bear emerging from the tree line or a rare bird landing on a branch) you can quickly snap on the teleconverter and get the shot. It bridges the gap between different photography genres, making your existing kit infinitely more adaptable to unpredictable situations.

THE CONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

While teleconverters are fantastic problem-solvers, they are not magic. Magnifying the image comes with distinct physical and optical trade-offs that you must be prepared to handle.

1. MAGNIFYING LENS IMPERFECTIONS

A teleconverter doesn't just magnify the subject in your frame; it magnifies absolutely everything, including any optical flaws inherent in your primary lens. If the lens you are using is slightly soft wide open, or if it is prone to chromatic aberration and color fringing, those issues will become much more apparent. For this reason, teleconverters perform best when paired with extremely sharp, high-quality "pro" lenses. If you attempt to use a cheaper kit lens, the image degradation from a teleconverter might be too significant to ignore.

Additionally, many experienced photographers prefer the 1.4x over the 2.0x, as the 1.4x introduces far less optical distortion and maintains better overall image quality.

2. THE INEVITABLE LOSS OF LIGHT

When you use a teleconverter, you lose light, and this is perhaps the biggest hurdle you will need to overcome.

A 1.4x teleconverter costs you one full stop of light.

A 2.0x teleconverter costs you two full stops of light.

Let's look at how this impacts your shooting. If you attach a 2.0x teleconverter to a 70-200mm f/2.8 lens, your maximum aperture is now f/5.6. That is still highly manageable in most lighting conditions.

However, if you attach a 2.0x teleconverter to a slower lens with a maximum aperture of f/5.6, your new maximum aperture becomes a very dark f/11.





Sigma TC-1401 1.4x Teleconverter

Shooting at $f/11$ presents several serious challenges. You will need an abundance of bright, midday natural light to properly expose your image. In low light, during the golden hour, in overcast conditions, or deep in shaded forests, you will be forced to crank up your ISO significantly to maintain a fast enough shutter speed. This inevitably introduces unwanted digital noise and grain into your photos.

3. SLOWER AUTOFOCUS PERFORMANCE

Because the teleconverter reduces the amount of light reaching your camera's sensor, it directly impacts the performance of your autofocus system.

Phase-detection autofocus relies on light to function accurately and quickly. When you cut the light by one or two stops, your

camera has to work much harder to lock onto a subject.

You will likely notice that the autofocus "hunts" more frequently or feels sluggish compared to using the bare lens. In extreme cases, like trying to track fast-moving subjects at $f/11$ in dim light, the autofocus may struggle to lock on entirely.

4. STRICT COMPATIBILITY CONSTRAINTS

It is vital to understand that not every teleconverter works with every lens. Due to the protruding front glass elements of many teleconverters, they physically cannot be mounted onto certain lenses without the glass colliding and causing damage.

Before you make a purchase, you must do your research. Check the manufacturer's official compatibility charts to ensure the teleconverter will seamlessly communicate with both your specific lens model and your camera body.

TIPS FOR MASTERING THE TELECONVERTER

If you have weighed the pros and cons and decided to add a teleconverter to your kit bag, here are a few best practices to ensure you consistently get crisp, professional-level results:

STOP DOWN FOR SHARPNESS

Because teleconverters amplify inherent softness, try stopping down your aperture by an additional stop if the ambient light allows for it. For example, if you are shooting at an effective $f/5.6$, stopping down to $f/8$ can drastically improve edge-to-edge sharpness and boost overall contrast.

KEEP YOUR SHUTTER SPEED AGGRESSIVELY HIGH

When you double your focal length, you also double your susceptibility to camera shake. A tiny, microscopic vibration at 200mm becomes a massive, image-ruining blur at 400mm or 600mm.

Make sure you are keeping your shutter speed high (often faster than $1/1000$ th of a second for moving subjects) and don't hesitate to utilize a monopod or a sturdy tripod to stabilize your setup.

MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS WITH THE 2.0X

The 2.0x teleconverter is incredibly tempting because of the massive reach it provides on paper. But remember, the two-stop light penalty and the magnified optical flaws make it a challenging piece of gear to master.

The 1.4x is widely considered the "sweet spot" for teleconverters, offering a highly noticeable bump in focal length while maintaining excellent sharpness and snappy autofocus speeds.

IN CONCLUSION

A teleconverter is an absolute game-changer for photographers looking to expand their visual reach on a budget. It allows you to transform a standard telephoto lens into a legitimate wildlife or sports tool in a matter of seconds.

Yes, you will lose some light, and your autofocus might take a slight hit in speed. But when you find yourself face-to-face with an incredible subject that would have otherwise been completely out of range, you will be deeply thankful to have that little piece of glass sitting in your bag.

Do your research, understand the physical limitations, and get ready to capture the world from an exciting new perspective.

VIDEO TUTORIAL: THE PROBLEM WITH TELECONVERTERS

by TONY & CHELSEA NORTHRUP



Chelsea Northrup Mercado goes over how and when to use teleconverters as well as the pros and cons.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Chelsea and Tony Northrup are photographers based in Connecticut. They are the creators of the top-rated photography book, "[Tony Northrup's DSLR Book: How to Create Stunning Digital Photography](#)" which features over nine hours of video training and free lifetime updates. To see more of their tutorials and photos you can follow them on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#)

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