DIGIT

UPCOMING DI GROUP EVENTS

Details of all DIG events are available on the Group's website at:

www.rps.org/special-interest-groups/digital-imaging/events

"Along the Promenade" by Janet Russel LRPS
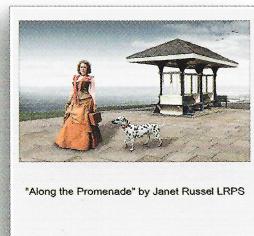
September Meeting
Members Images Discussion & Photo Challenge

Digital Imaging Group
Scotland Centre

13th September 2015
Bridge of Allen Parish Church, FK9 4NW

Matt Emmett

Forgotten Heritage Photography

Digital Imaging Group
Thames Valley Centre

13th September 2015
Woosehill Community Hall, RG41 3DA
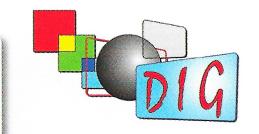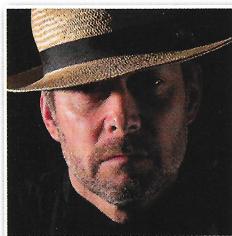
Leigh Preston
FRPS, EFIAP, MPAGB

Hallmarks and Performances

Digital Imaging Group
Thames Valley Centre

11th October 2015
Woosehill Community Hall, RG41 3DA

Visual Alchemy

Lecture by
Rikki O'Neill FRPS

Digital Imaging Group
Southern Centre

1st November 2015
Grayfriars Community Centre, BH24 1DW

THE **RPS**
ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

DIGITAL IMAGING GROUP SCOTLAND CENTRE

Images Workflow and Inspiration
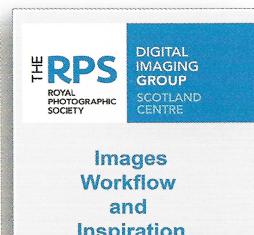
November Meeting

An Afternoon with Peter Paterson FRPS

Digital Imaging Group
Scotland Centre

8th November 2015
Bridge of Allen Parish Church, FK9 4NW

Presentations and Millenium Cup Competition for Prints

Digital Imaging Group
Thames Valley Centre

22nd November 2015
Woosehill Community Hall, RG41 3DA

Distinctions
on
Display
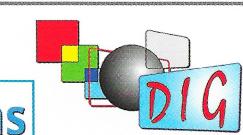
See Recent Licentiateship Associateship Fellowship Panels

Digital Imaging Group
Southern Centre

6th December 2015
Grayfriars Community Centre, BH24 1DW
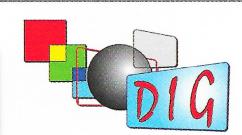
Jeff Morgan
Ways to use Elements

Digital Imaging Group
Western Centre

13th December 2015
Merryfield Village Hall, TA19 9HG

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DIGIT

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

It has been a great pleasure for me to work on my first issue of RPS DIGIT.

I have worked as a reporter and sub-editor for a business news agency, newspapers, magazines and TV throughout my professional life, so I hope to bring a considerable wealth of experience to my new role.

I have always had an interest in photography and had my own black and white darkroom in the film days. Family life prevented me from pursuing my hobby seriously but I continued to take many photos of all genres. When digital photography became available, I completely embraced the technology. However, at that time I was living in Asia with my family and found it frustrating to have no access to any formal training or photographic clubs.

I now live back in the UK and joined the Guildford Photographic Society last October, where I immediately became an enthusiastic member. I have had great support and advice there and thoroughly enjoy the weekly presentations and monthly workshops as well as informal social evenings in the summer.

In this issue of DIGIT, I have been fortunate to have many interesting contributions. Walter Benzie outlines his vision for the future of the RPS on the eve of his presidency. Internationally renowned landscape photographer and founder of *Light and Land* photography tour company, Charlie Waite generously spent his time with me to share his thoughts on photography as art. At that time, he was fresh from exhibiting at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition 2015, (see cover pic).

Anthony Healy suggests photo books as a solution to the concern over digital obsolescence, Paul Sanders provides an exposé on long exposure photography and David Sadler discusses the background and details of his unusual *selfie* ARPS panel.

In addition, there is a variety of DIGIT Challenge articles.

For the future, I would like to welcome contributions from our overseas members. Having lived overseas myself for many years, primarily in Asia, I am more than aware that there can be a feeling of isolation from the hub of activity in the UK. I have an open mind as to whether features show stunning landscapes; street photography; technical or practical advice. For unusual, or technically difficult, single photos, there is always a slot in the Challenge section. The more variety the better.

Here at DIGIT, we are all very busy preparing for the DI Expo in Warwick on 20 September. I hope to meet many of you there and will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Margaret Preston *digiteditor@rps.org*

FROM THE CHAIR

The controversial question: "DI Group – Are we ready for the sunset then?" was put to Forum members recently by one of the originating members of the DIG. He went on to point out that most photographers are digital these days and that much of the work in the DIG competitions and Web site could be taken on a digital camera. He finished by saying ". . . perhaps it is time to redefine the boundaries of digital imaging groups, remove the 'digital' tag and call it what it is – creative, manipulated, derived or whatever."

Personally I love challenges like this and feel it does us good to examine our *raison d'être* once in a while. It was interesting to read the feedback comments from various DIG Forum members. They were not happy with the comment, pointing out the success and growth of DIG and that we are by far and away the most active group on the RPS Forum. Many felt that they had learnt a lot from being a DIG Forum member and continue to do so.

Without doubt, we are the most successful group in the RPS with 1600+ members.

Individuals join and stay – so we must be getting something right. We enjoy diversity of images. We embrace new ideas and respect traditional work.

The DIG Committee ethos is to give our members value for money with as many varied ways to interact with one another as possible. DIG was formed as a means of sharing knowledge and learning all about the new software etc. and that remains the case. Digital is still advancing and cameras are evolving, so there is always more to learn and understand. Through DIGIT, the Forum, Centre meetings and now the DI Expo, we are continually endeavouring to impart knowledge and learning to our members and sharing experiences. Whilst we remain so seemingly successful I ask "why would we consider disbanding or even bothering to change our name?" As the old adage says "if it ain't broke, don't fix it".

New Centres. Much work is going on behind the scenes to organise some new centres. We are delighted to announce that the new NW DIG Centre will hold its inaugural meeting on September 27, 2015, at Warrington. It should be a fantastic programme with Adrian Lines and Terry Donnelly as the two speakers. Not one to miss. I'll be there, so hope you will be too, if you live in the area.

Work is also ongoing in the Midlands and the Northern Region. We will give you more information about them in due course.

New Editor. I cannot wait to see what our new Editor, Margaret Preston has in store for us with this, her first edition. It may surprise you to know that even as Chair I do not see the finished article any sooner than you do. But what I do know, is how hard Margaret has worked to assimilate all the information and processes needed to put DIGIT together. It is a pretty daunting task and she has impressed me with her 'can do' attitude and professionalism. Thank you for accepting the post Margaret and to you and the team for putting in so much hard work in getting this issue together.

Janet Haines, ARPS DIG Chair
digchair@rps.org

RPS: MY AMBITIOUS ROAD AHEAD

Incoming RPS President Walter Benzie, ARPS, started his photographic career at the Guildford Photographic Society, where he rose to Chairman and was appointed Royal Photographer for the Cathedral's Jubilee celebration. He has been an active and enthusiastic competition judge and aims to maintain a good relationship with the PAGB. He shares his challenging and wide-ranging ambitions for the RPS with DIGIT.

In the role of RPS Treasurer, a position I retained for 5 years, I learned a great deal about the workings and operation of the organisation as a whole. Meeting people such as Steve McCurry, Brian May and Annie Leibovitz are just some of the highlights.

The RPS has so much to offer, from astronomy to fine art and everything in between. Exhibitions, educational courses, micro events and now, our Open University (OU) course is something quite different and should appeal to a wider range of photographers. The distinctions' process is also an excellent way to improve your photographic skills. In club photography, you look at only one image at a time – the RPS concentrates on a panel of work, which is far more of a personal statement. In exhibitions, I much prefer to see a body of work from a photographer, rather than random images. It is like looking at the bookshelf of a friend, or their music collection, to gain an insight into their character.

To make the best of the RPS, you do, however, have to make some effort and participate yourself. I am a member of the Digital and the Historical Special Interest Groups. I also have a particular interest in the SIGs generally and want to attend at least one activity of each over the next two years. Group events are one way of seeing exquisite work from top photographers, which is not generally accessible to others – and you can go to any group or regional event, even if you are not a member.

As regards my future presidency, it will give a wonderful excuse to visit regions and groups I have never been to before.

Specifically, I want to concentrate on the following issues:

- Maintain the standards of our world class distinctions
- Enhance our educational role through our courses and in particular the exciting new OU programme
- Support the activities of our Special Interest Groups
- Encourage more participation in the many competitions and exhibitions organised by the RPS
- Increase our membership but, more significantly, give existing members further opportunities to participate in The Society and thus become more active members. The evidence is that active members are satisfied members.
- Explore ways to help our overseas members to participate and engage with us
- Continue improving our links with other photographic organisations, particularly the PAGB and the camera clubs around the country
- Lead the discussion on how to make our Governance procedures more efficient and transparent

In the past, I was invited to the Home office, where we lobbied for photographers' rights and made it clear that it is a citizen's right to take pictures of public places, except in the most unusual of circumstances. I believe it part of our brief to be vigilant for the protection of those rights and that also covers copyright issues which come up from time to time.

One of my most satisfying appointments was to be made a panel member for the Licenciateship assessments; I have always seen the 'L' as the gateway to excellence in photography. It should not be beyond the capability of any competent photographer and our aim is to pass as many candidates as possible – whilst not diluting the standard. As president, I hope to be retained on the panel – as an ordinary panel member.

The median age of members is in the late 60s and in my opinion, women are still under-represented. Those women in our ranks do, however, punch above their weight.

I am also aware that the Society may have to reconsider its strategy as to how best to appeal to its members. There is some evidence to suggest that major events are more difficult to fill than in the past. We may need to look at micro events; small informal groups, meeting locally for a brief photoshoot and a coffee or a beer.

Traditionally, we have concentrated on the middle ground of the enthusiast but we are not adequately represented at the furthest ends of the spectrum. At one end, the beginner in photography is not very well catered for and we need to consider whether we can produce some simple webinars covering the basics of photography and again encourage small groups to meet, physically and on the forum, to try to improve their technique. This might also help to bring the age profile down a bit!

At the other end, we do not really meet the needs of the professional photographer in a purposeful way. We do offer educational courses in running your own photographic business and some specialist programmes suitable for the professional, but we do not have a cohesive strategy in this regard.

As you can see I will not be short of things to do.

Above all enjoy your photography.

BEYOND BEAUTIFUL

As the Royal Academy of Arts accepts photography in its Summer Exhibition, Charlie Waite FRPS, who was invited to exhibit, says he is delighted that this art form is starting to have credence among the establishment. Sharing his vision with Margaret Preston, he challenges the view that photos have to be edgy in order to be embraced by the intelligentsia, discusses the power of beauty and suggests we get matey with clouds.

Rio Uruguay, boats in mist

It's almost beyond belief really that photography hasn't been given a greater voice in this country. In order for it to be embraced by the *validators* as Grayson Perry calls them, they've got to be edgy.

I think a photo has got to have an intellectual scaffolding bolted on to it and an intellectual framework. I have gone to the Paris Photo fair and various fairs all over the place and I sometimes find it difficult to detect the content. In order to know what it is, I need to talk to the curator or creator of the work and then I find that it has got a rather extraordinary and interesting background to it. The image doesn't tell anything. So to

have a photograph in the Royal Academy was terrific. I suppose its possibly saying that photography is now accepted in various different forms by the establishment.

I had an exhibition in London at the National Theatre last year called *Silent Exchange: Return to Beauty* and I am very keen on the immediate response that the viewer of a landscape photograph gets, as opposed to one that perhaps bewilders. Usually people react favourably to something beautiful. I knew somebody who did a lot of research in hospitals in the US on how patients feel when they are looking at something that, to their mind, they find beautiful. They are given far less pain relief apparently

and get out of hospital sooner. I think, like a beautiful piece of music or a beautiful sculpture or painting, there is a norm of beauty that makes people say "isn't that just absolutely beautiful". In a way you are transported to another place that is a very nice place to be.

When we bolt onto something that we personally find beautiful it's terrifically enriching. I went to watch a heron landing the other day. It was such a thing of beauty to see the way it landed and used its feathers as a breaking mechanism. I remember seeing the way a Grecian dress was carved in Delphi. Just touching the folds of this dress was so beautiful. So I
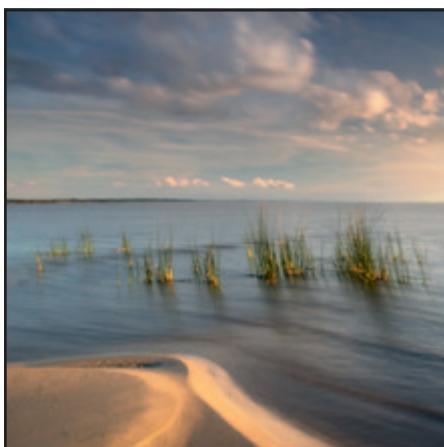
Park San Miguel Cerro Verde

Rio Uruguay leaves in river

Rio Uruguay white heron

Reflection, reeds

think *Return to Beauty* was all about sub-text really. I think provocative works, the challenging works, have their place. I am not sure if they are a thing of beauty.

It seems rather simplistic but we are a bit dislocated from the natural world and that troubles me a lot. We don't have it on tap any more. We all know what a lovely walk does; setting off at dawn and seeing the sun rise and how we are affected by it.

The very dark little almond trees in Órgiva, Spain, (see cover) are only about 10 feet high. Normally one waits for light to illuminate your subject but I thought it would be better for it not to be lit by hard sunlight. To keep the contrast low, I waited for the background hill to light up quite harshly to pull out the five little almond trees. The almond trees blossom – usually appropriately around Valentine's day – and the whole landscape is drenched in a lovely dusty pink. Its performance, which is so ravishing, probably lasts only about three weeks.

It's too agonising to let Spring go. You barely have time to relish it before you're hacking it down and tidying it up. I think blossom is just the most wonderful phenomenon. People think it is clichéd to photograph blossom but everyone's photograph

is completely unique to them and it matters hugely. I suppose the thing that is distressing is that often one's result doesn't have parity with one's emotional response so people end up feeling disappointed.

I think if you produce a photograph – I am not saying that is dishonest – but that has been artificialised, or raises suspicion in the viewer, – such as a sky that is too violet or too indigo – then the clean response that prevails between viewer and the image on

the wall is just smashed. I think one should just say "Oh, Oh! Look at that. Isn't that just spot on" or "isn't that just wonderful."

It is important to identify the quality of light that one finds appealing. There are hundreds who absolutely love misty mornings and what I call swirling chiffon rolling through the landscape and it's terrific on the eye. I am not actually terribly good at it because I find it a bit indiscriminate to know quite which bits to get revealed and
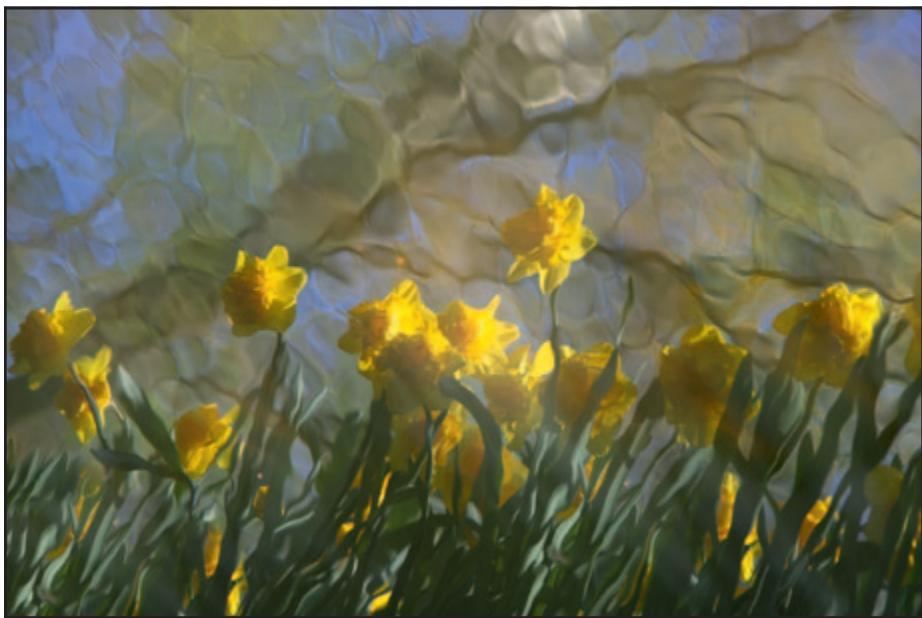
Daffodils, reflection

which not. I think it's all right when you have lots of little cracks everywhere and hollows that are filled up with mist but there are those people who like it very flat. I am probably rather traditional. I am absolutely fascinated by the way a Yorkshire dry stone wall can throw a shadow 200 feet long before the sun disappears, taking away that last bit of hard sunlight.

The two-dimensional nature of photography needs to be mitigated somehow by trying to add depth, so using light and orchestrating light to suit one's purpose is pretty good. It's jolly frustrating as well because you can't always get compliant clouds. I find them helpful because there's nothing like using a few friendly clouds to conceal, with their shadows, parts of the landscape you don't

particularly want to emphasise. It helps to have a bit of a wind up and some clouds that you can be matey with and then they can perform for you hopefully and put some shadows where you would like them to go.

Also it is very easy to accept clouds that are just there at the time instead of looking up. I spend a lot of time looking up and waiting for some rather better ones to come. As a child in the New Forest, my Mum rather brilliantly, put cloud wallpaper on the ceiling and as I went off to sleep I went into this dreamy cloudscape. So I'm often looking up and it's a big chunk of our world that we're often denied. City dwellers probably only get a quarter or a fifth of the sky so they can't tap into that energy. I think people living in Lincolnshire must do pretty well because lots of places have wonderful skies.

When we travel, we reveal much more of ourselves. When we are abroad, we are super-alert and super-sensitive and our relationships with people – short though they may be – are very trusting and rather beautiful. So I think relationships and one's sense of who one is are much more heightened when travelling abroad. I think it's more than just seeing all the museums and all the classical iconic places.

It elevates us to communicate with other people without even a language but as far as photography is concerned, I get rather

Rape and flax fields
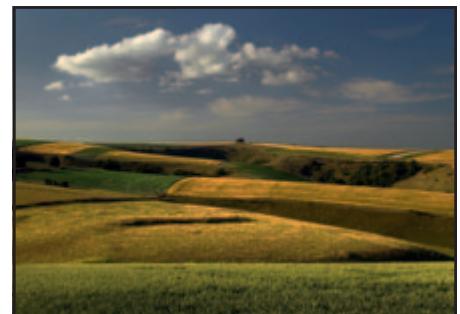
Towards Win Green, Wiltshire/Dorset border

Rydal Water, Cumbria

Autoire, France

nervous. I don't want to do anything that has not been thought through. I probably take more care, more time, as I want to try to find the essence of the place as opposed to something that could be just a recording of an event. Sometimes separating those things is quite difficult because you could go to an amazing camel fair in Rajasthan but discover, when you get back, that there's a whole load of camels masking another load of camels. It's an absolute jumble of content, a complete mess because one was so overwhelmed by the event. i think one has to keep the

Dijon, France

Jura St Claude, France

CHARLIE WAITE FRPS

Misty Hampshire

discerning element of photography right up in the front line when one's abroad.

We all know that photography is a contemplative, meditative occupation so being alone is quite important. Being alone in one's own country is jolly difficult. It's so busy everywhere. One of the reasons France is so lovely to photograph is because it's still absolutely empty.

I think the quiet corners that a country has to offer are my favourite places as opposed to the big seven-star Unesco World Heritage sites. I have seen a few. You just gasp in awe but at the same time a little field and a hedge

and a few trees – if they're lit in a certain way – can transport you by their simple little story in the landscape. I still think that is as elevating and enriching as anything else. It's a bit like a ballet where you see the few principle dancers and then somebody else comes on. They don't really have a big role but they're absolutely magical.

I find France, Italy and parts of Spain still very rewarding. I think the space is so helpful in giving you the ability to get in the right frame of mind. Space is jolly difficult to find and that's really why the Mecca for landscape photographers continues to be Glencoe, Wales and some of the

Outer Hebrides. It's not just because they are marvellous and striking landscapes but because there are not many people there. You can feel a sense of quiet. One's photography can emerge successfully usually in a climate of peace.

I like photographing architecture. I think the issue is that I am not coordinating different elements that I have orchestrated to come together to make a satisfying whole. I am photographing somebody else's artwork, their building. I am honouring in a way and interpreting it, but a large percentage of the credit has to go to the architect. I don't feel it's entirely mine.

Misty reflection

Buttermere ii, Cumbria

I have photographed a lot of actors over the years and when they revealed themselves in their best light, whatever that was, it was really rather wonderful. When they got a sense of self-worth and they suddenly realised that they did have something to contribute, they absolutely radiated out who they were as a human being. That understanding of themselves radiated out through their eyes and it was always the image one wanted.

Landscapes can sometimes be like that. They can sometimes, after quite a lot of tenacity, really return back to you the feeling you had at the time. I used to call it nature suspended in one of its most perfect performances and it is just lovely when you can try and encapsulate your emotional response in a photograph.

It's a big ask. It doesn't speak. It doesn't move like moving film. It's quite a lot of work to awaken something in the viewer.

Libya, Tripoli

My printer paper of choice

With the inkjet printer arrival, one was always looking for definition and ink quality and longevity that matched the Cibachrome print. Finally it arrived some 10 years ago and now Giclée is excellent. I like to look under my old Schneider X4 **lupe and examine the way the ink has been laid down on my Fotospeed platinum etching that I like to use. I am always very pleased at the way the inks are held tight into the fibres of the paper without any ink migration.** **It is essential for photographers and for viewers of their photography that the creators make prints of their work. Merely seeing images on a monitor or a tablet is a poor finale for all the investment that went into the making of the image.**
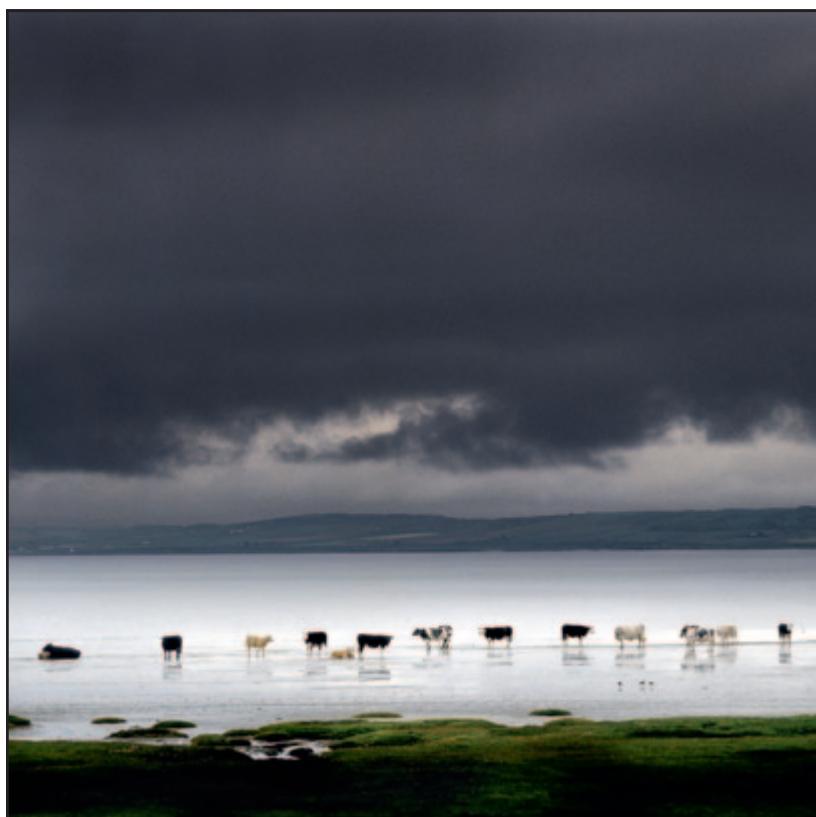
Loch Indaal Islay, Scotland

Skanes, Tunisia

SHORT ROUTE TO LONG EXPOSURE

Long exposure photography can help you achieve an output that matches the sense of calm you feel when viewing a landscape – provided you connect emotionally with your subject, says Paul Sanders. In this feature, he details the equipment that is also required, his successful workflow, common problems associated with the use of neutral density filters and how to avoid them.

In my previous job as Picture Editor of *The Times* I used to scour over 20,000 images a day trying to find one image for the front page. I lived my life at breakneck speed. I left *The Times* at the end of 2011 convinced there must be more to life.

Long exposure photography allows me to explore a sense of calm, a visual relaxation that matches the way I feel when I look at the landscape.

You have to connect with the subject you are photographing, whatever your chosen genre of photography. If you are emotionally switched off from your photography you will never achieve the results that really touch you. It's no good just shooting blindly, you have to understand why you are driven to taking pictures of certain subjects.

Technique and equipment

Long Exposures for me are anything over 30 seconds, although most *Facebook* groups argue that it should be anything over 1 second. Generally, I refer to long exposure work as images that are made with the help of neutral density filters.

To create successful long exposures you need: A camera with a B setting in the shutter speed range, plus either an electronic or screw-in cable release with a lock and ideally a timer – although most cameras have built in timers now. You'll need a sturdy tripod and a set of filters.

The filters you use will depend on your budget. Brands like Lee and Formatt Hitech are more expensive but they are better in manufacture, consistency of colour and density.

So when it comes to filters, buy a system with a holder and adapter rings; you can mix filters with systems too. I use Lee adapter rings and holders and some of
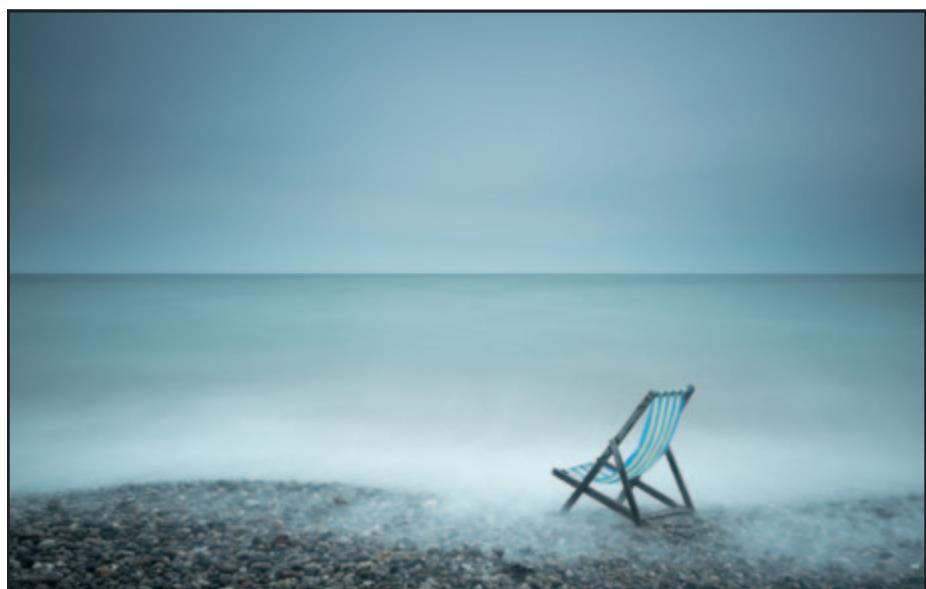
Beer, Devon. 30 seconds *f*/18 Fuji X-T1 with 10–24mm @15mm

Winchelsea, Sussex. 40 seconds *f*/16Fuji X-T1 with 56mm

Manhattan Bridge, New York. 250 seconds *f*/10Fuji X-T1 with 10–24mm @10mm

their filters but I add to the Lee system with Formatt Hitech. They are all 100mm and are interchangeable. Don't buy the variable screw-in filters as you can't accurately predict what density you are shooting through and don't buy cheap brands of filters because the colour of a neutral density filter is meant to be neutral, not pink or green as some are.

To get you started you should buy the following: a 0.6 (2 stop) graduated ND filter, a 10 stop ND filter and a 3 stop ND filter.

You can shoot long exposures on any lens, so don't always stick a wide angle on and think it will make the best focal length for this type of work. Lens choice is personal and entirely related to the subject too, so don't get railroaded into shooting very wide angles, hoping they will work as often they won't.

Locations and Subject
You can shoot any subject with a long exposure but before you invest 5 to 10 minutes of your time you have to ask yourself what is moving and what is stationary. Are you trying to capture a fast-moving sky, water swirling through a series of rocks or the incoming tide?

Most people begin with groynes on beaches, with the tide breaking around them. It's almost a right of passage!

Composition is very important. Many people think that milky water or a blurry cloud will replace a well-executed image. It won't. So think about how you would normally compose your pictures and work with that.

I have a workflow that works for me. I find my location and spend a great deal of time looking and observing how things are. I form an image in my head once I know what I want to achieve. I set up my tripod. Good tripod craft is essential. Many people don't bother to extend legs correctly or get the tripod level so they make life hard for themselves from the outset.

I place the camera and lens on the tripod, attach the cable release and the filter holder. At this

Swanage Dorset. 180 seconds *f*/14 Fuji X-T1 with 18–55mm @24mm

point, I turn the camera on and make sure the ISO is nice and low. My Fuji will shoot only at 200 ISO in RAW but if you can go lower then shoot at 100 or 50 ISO.

One very important thing to check before you start shooting is in the menu. Find the Long Exposure noise reduction and turn it off. If you leave it on, the camera will shoot a second exposure that is essentially a black frame to eliminate any noise generated during the exposure. This will take as long as the first exposure but will render your camera useless for the duration.

Fine tune your composition, making sure only the things you want are in the frame and that they are where you want them.

I usually do a test exposure, although, as you get more experienced, you will probably skip this step. I do this to establish what the basic exposure will look like without any filters. I expose for the shadow areas, aiming to get detail in them. Once I am happy with the way these parts of the image look I add a graduated filter to control the contrast from the sky. I start by adding a 0.6 graduated filter. If I have a straight horizon

Rottemere, Netherlands. 140 seconds *f*/10 Fuji X-T1 with 35mm

Portsmouth Hampshire. 220 seconds *f*/8Fuji X-T1 with 56mm

Tower Bridge London. 220 second
f/16Fuji X-T1 with 10–24mm @10mm

I will use a hard grad, otherwise I use soft grad. During this time, I am continually checking the histogram, making sure that the highlights aren't clipped. I always shoot to the right of the histogram, to get as much digital information into the image as possible.

When I am satisfied with the addition of the graduated filter I check the exposure. This becomes the base exposure.

For the sake of argument, let's say the exposure is 1/4 of a second at F16. Make a note of this or remember it.

Before you add you ND filter, double check your focusing, then turn off the AF and check again to see if your image is sharp. It's advisable to turn off the AF before adding the solid ND filters. If you leave the AF on and try to take the picture, the AF will hunt and your image will be out of focus. This is due to the fact that most AF systems can't see through the dark glass of a 10-stop ND filter!

After checking your focus again, place the 10-stop ND filter in the slot closest to the lens. Most 6-, 10- and 16-stop ND filters have a little foam light trap on the back. Make sure this fits snuggly against the filter holder.

Turn your camera on to the B setting in the shutter speed range and check that your aperture hasn't changed. On some Canon cameras the aperture doesn't carry over to B and you have to reset it – so please double check!

You now have to recalculate the exposure to allow for the 10-stop neutral density filter you have placed in front of the lens. Some filters come with a piece of paper that gives you approximate conversions, or you can, as I do, use one of the many apps that are available for your phone. I use ND Timer, but there are lots more – many free. Some cost a couple of pounds but they are easier than counting and some have a countdown timer too, which is very useful if you haven't got a timer on your cable release or camera.

On the app, start with your base shutter speed (the aperture stays the same

Whitby N Yorkshire. 170 seconds *f*/18Fuji X-T1 with 10–24mm @12mm
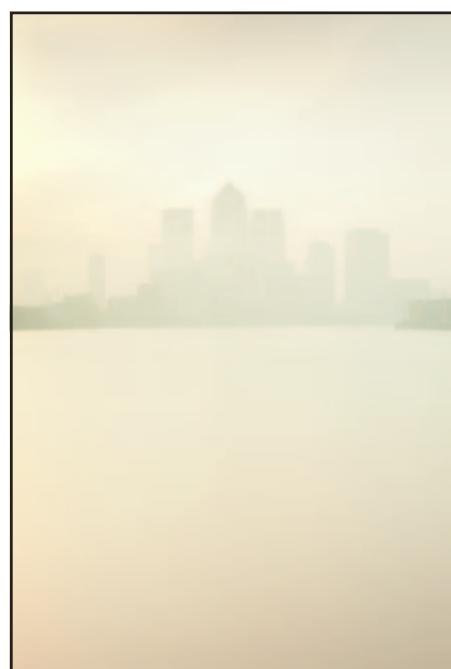
Canary Wharf London. 125 second
f/11Fuji X-T1 with 35mm
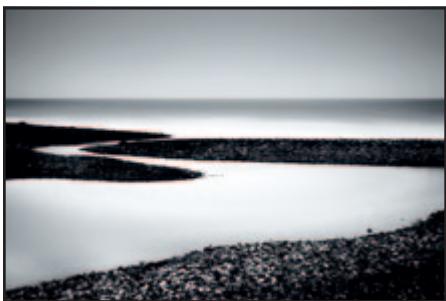
Charmouth, Dorset. 110 seconds *f*/8Fuji X-T1 with 35mm

regardless) then add the strength of filter you have used. So a shutter speed of 1/4 of a second becomes 4 minutes and 16 seconds.

You are almost ready to take your picture. Let's hope the tide hasn't gone out yet!

If you have an eyepiece blind, use it, often stray light can enter through the viewfinder and cause strange flare but if you don't have one use a hat or chamois.

Now press the button on the cable release and lock it. Start your timer and wait.

Hopefully you'll be happy with the image but perhaps you have made one of the many mistakes I have.

Common Mistakes

The image may be bluer than you expected. Some ND filters have a slight blue cast. You can get rid of this by shooting in RAW and adjusting in post-processing or you can adjust the white balance of the image at shooting. If you use a custom white balance and dial in a colour temperature of between 8,000 and 10,000K the blue cast will be minimal.

If your image is totally white, have you remembered to place the ND filter in front of the lens? I've forgotten several times! Did you check your aperture was the same as your base exposure?

You may have flare down one side of the image. If the sun is to the side of the camera it can cause flare as it can reflect through the edges of the filters. On a sunny day, I often shield the filters either with a cloth over the edge, gaffer tape or my hand.

You may have camera shake. If it is windy, try shielding the camera with your body or an umbrella.

The key to success is practice but also to enjoy using the technique.

Hopefully you will persevere through the learning curve and produce some beautiful images that reflect a sense of space and calm.

Symondsbury Dorset. 90 seconds *f*/16Fuji X-T1 with 56mm
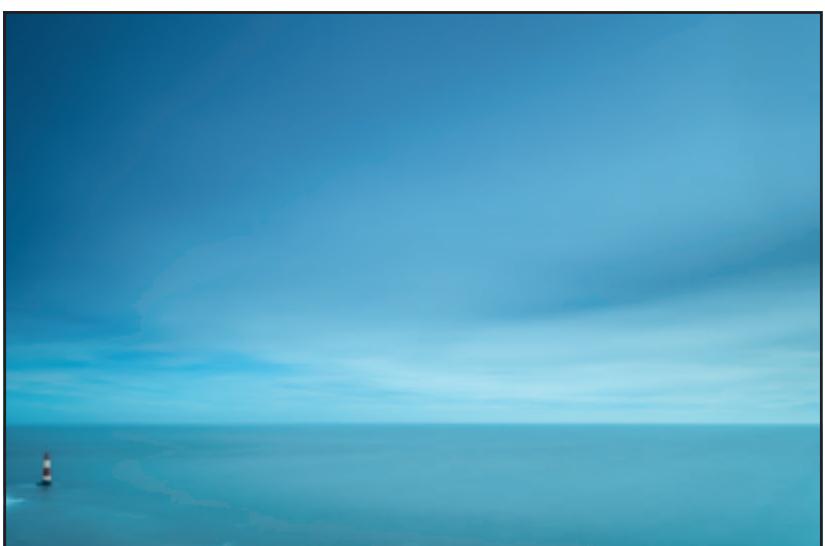
Beachy Head Sussex. 267 seconds *f*/11 Fuji Fuji Xpro 1 with 14mm

BRINGING SELFIES TO ANOTHER LEVEL

Using a fisheye lens for its dramatic perspective and all-inclusive view, David Sadler ARPS produced a series of eye-catching selfie images for his distinction panel. Taken in the course of seemingly mundane activities, additional impact was achieved with bold post-processing techniques. With a little imagination it is possible to find photographic inspiration close to home, he says.

Cheese on Toast. Canon 650D, AV, 10mm, *f*/11, 1/4 sec, ISO 400. Composite of 3 images: a) Camera inside grill (off) focused on toast; b) camera inside grill (off) focused on main subject – mixture of tungsten kitchen lights and 2 off-camera flash units left and right and c) camera outside grill (on and glowing).

I bought my fisheye lens to shoot skateboarders at my local park. I soon started taking pictures of myself skateboarding, albeit in more sedate fashion. I now use my fisheye for all kinds of subjects, often breaking the rules. I like to try something a bit different and whenever

I am struggling for inspiration, the fisheye is the lens I reach for. I love the distortion, the dramatic and interesting perspective it gives and the peripheral curvature to round things off. However, when used carefully and by placing the main subject centrally, a decent, if slightly wacky, portrait image

can still be obtained. The all-inclusive field of view suits environmental portraits particularly well.

I did not set out to take a series of wacky selfies to submit for a distinction. I simply enjoyed the challenge and humour of

the situations I imagined and created. I was spurred on by the positive feedback the images were receiving on *Flickr* and *Facebook* and in internal club competitions.

Most of the photographic situations presented were created in and around my own home. Before long I had a series of related images which exhibited a distinctive personal style. When I researched the requirements for RPS distinctions I realised I was probably closer to an A panel than I was to an L! So I aimed for ARPS without doing LRPS and was encouraged to do so by several senior members at Dundee Photographic Society and at two RPS advisory days.

Being my own subject enabled me to stage elaborate activities with more care than I could have done with volunteers. I was free to reorganise the scene, reposition the elements and re-shoot as many times as I wanted without inconveniencing anyone else. The results are far from flattering in the traditional portrait sense. They are intended to be visually interesting, stimulating and strangely humorous, whilst at the same time being grounded in reassuring familiarity.

Eye contact was an essential feature in all but one of the images and a variety of viewpoints was used, mostly at eye level but also from well above and well below. The use of slow-synch flash to give the impression of movement was an important component in both of the skateboarding shots, *Splat* and *Landpaddling*.

Splat! Canon 600D, TV, 10mm, *f*/22, 1/2 sec, ISO 100. Camera clamped to rolling skateboard. Off-camera flash to right. Remote control on ground on 2-second delay. Slow shutter speed.

Use of a swivel and tilt screen helped the composition in *Cheese on Toast*, *Jalapeños* and *Drive*. Shutter release was mostly by remote control. Despite careful planning and experimentation, I still get the greatest thrill when serendipity contributes, as happened when I was photo-bombed by my cat in the *Snack Time* set up.

Most of my panel images were fairly straight and were obtained in-camera without much Photoshop jiggery-pokery. *Cheese on Toast* was the exception, being an elaborate composite of three technically challenging component images combined as layers in Photoshop.

The processing workflow was similar for all the images and involved creating an HDR tone-mapped image from the edited RAW file. This was tweaked further in Topaz Adjust – a plug-in for Photoshop. To me, the images seemed to withstand and even suit the bold processing techniques employed.

I printed the images out and arranged them on the living room floor. It looked like a dog's breakfast! The images were completely incongruous and did not work as a panel at all. This should have come as no surprise, since the images were all taken at different times, under various lighting conditions and were processed individually with no common purpose. I had hit a brick wall.

Against some advice, I convinced myself that presentation as digital projected images might be the answer, particularly

since my images were more about initial impact than technically flawless print quality.

The final arrangement of the images forms a logical sequence of activities throughout an imaginary day: starting with a shave; progressing through chores; daytime relaxation; mealtime; recreation skateboarding and finally evening

Landpaddling. Canon 600D, AV, 10mm, *f*/22, 1/10 sec, ISO 100. Camera clamped to upper rattan pole. Daylight and slow synch pop-up flash.

Jalapeños. Canon 650D, AV, 11mm, *f*/8, 1/2 sec, ISO 200. Mixture of tungsten kitchen lights and flash. Off-camera flash on table to left.

Drive. Canon 650D, 12mm, AV, *f*/16, 1/16 sec, ISO 400. Off-camera flash with diffuser on passenger seat.

Equipment used:

The majority of the images were taken on a Canon 600D. The images, and, were taken on a Canon 650D which has the advantage of a flip-out tilt/swivel screen.

All pictures were taken with a Tokina 10–17mm /3.5–4.5 DX fisheye zoom lens. This amazing and reasonably affordable lens differs from most fisheyes in being a zoom. The wide angle of view gathers plenty of light and also offers enormous depth of field in most situations. An unexpected bonus is that it works equally well with crop and full frame Canon camera bodies. The field of view at 10mm on the Canon 600 or 650D (crop sensor) is the same at 17mm on my new Canon 6D (full frame).

A Canon Speedlite 550EX flashgun was used mostly off camera with a sync cord.

A Hahnel Combi TF remote shutter release was used for most shots.

Cheers! Canon 600D, AV, 10mm, *f*/8, 1/30 sec, ISO 3200. Tungsten kitchen lighting. One-handed shot with camera on right shoulder.

Open Wide. Canon 600D, AV, 10mm, *f*/8, 1/13 sec, ISO 400. Fluorescent garage light and off-camera flash on right.

Snack Time. Canon 600D, P, 10mm, *f*/4, 1/60 sec, ISO 400. Mixture of fridge interior bulb lighting and off-camera flash on floor beside open door.

relaxation. Some of the images might simply be regarded as panel fillers.

I took some risks in preparing this panel in terms of content, lens choice, processing, DPI presentation format and mainly by skipping the LRPS. I was thrilled that the adjudicators saw something interesting in my approach.

For the record, my personal favourite has to be *Cheese on Toast*.

Shaving. Canon 600D, P, 11mm, *f*/5, 1/60 sec, ISO 400. Mixed tungsten and flash lighting. Off-camera flash on floor in front, directed up to T-shirt.

Your Move. Canon 600D, AV, 10mm, *f*/10, 1.6 sec, ISO 400. Mixed tungsten and flash lighting, Fill-in flash.

Changing the Lightbulb. Canon 600D, AV, 10mm, *f*/7.1, 1/6 sec, ISO 400, Camera clamped to light fitting. Off-camera flash and diffuser below right and two tungsten lamps directed onto walls.

Coming Up. Canon 600D, P, 10mm, *f*/7.1, 1/125 sec, ISO 400. Daylight only.

Cutting the Grass. Canon 600D, TV, 10mm, *f*/22, 1/25 sec, ISO 100. Off-camera flash on grass to left.

Washing. Canon 600D, AV, 10mm, *f*/8, 1/30 sec, ISO 400. Daylight only.

Swing Seat. Canon 600D, TV, 11mm, *f*/16, 1/2 sec, ISO 200. Camera clamped to swing seat at eye level. Slow synch pop-up flash.

DIGITAL IMAGES: QUO VADIS?

As digital images are created on an ever-increasing range of devices, concern is mounting as to where the work is going and how best to save it for the future. Rapid developments in technology are making some traditional storage methods obsolete and retrieving our photographic data may become impossible. One solution for Anthony Healy, ARPS, is to make a digital photo book.

In February 2015, Vinton Cerf, a person who helped develop the Internet, told the BBC in an interview that, due to the speed with which digital technology is developing, we are entering a dark age in which we could lose all our current digital data due to obsolescence.

Pallab Ghosh, a reporter for the BBC, at a science conference in San Jose, California, pointed out that a 2,500 year old papyrus located in a museum still contained legible information. Yet, at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, in the heart of Silicon Valley, there are 15-year old examples of computer cutting edge technology whose data would be extremely difficult to retrieve and would probably be lost forever.

Applications come and go, so an application you used to create a work may no longer exist, or may no longer be compatible with your current operating system. Adobe PageMaker® has gone, as has Apple's Claris/AppleWorks. What will happen to your work? Does it have a future? What can be done about it ?

Vinton Cerf proposes an application that takes a snapshot of the subject, the application, the operating system and the machine on which it was created, so that in the future you will be able to access the data in its entirety. Well, I hope this is achieved and that there are people actively working on the solution.

In the meantime, back in 2009 I wrote an article in DIGIT 31, on making a book, using a feature of the Apple iPhoto® application. (See the DIGIT archive on the DIG web site.) Prior to that, some people were making photobooks using photographic paper. The drawback to that is bulk, particularly if the book is extensive. (Fig. 1). Since then, a number of companies have offered free software to enable people to create books on their home computer and have them published as a conventional book. The subject can be almost anything you desire.

Since 2009, I have moved away from Apple iPhoto®. I was looking for a more flexible set of options in creating pages for my books. I now use Blurb BookSmart®, but there are other companies that offer a similar service. Anyone who prints their own images and sends images to projected image competitions, or even camera club presentations, will be aware of how important colour profiles are, as moving your digital image around on different equipment can affect the colour result. It should be pointed out that the service companies won't necessarily be immune to that problem either, particularly when reproducing monotone images.

So what did I look for in creating my books? The first thing was flexibility of image shape. Not all compositions are best as squares or fixed-ratio rectangles. The Blurb company has an extensive range of image and text templates that you can choose from and each one can be altered to suit your format. Secondly, I wanted to be able to overlay images on one another (Fig. 2) as well as include text on an image. Of course this can be created in Adobe Photoshop, saved as an image and pasted in your book as an image without a text box, but this Blurb software option has a plus. The overlaid text can sit on an image and only obscure the background image below the actual character. Thirdly, I would like to be able to change the background colour of the page and fourthly use all the fonts available in my computer.
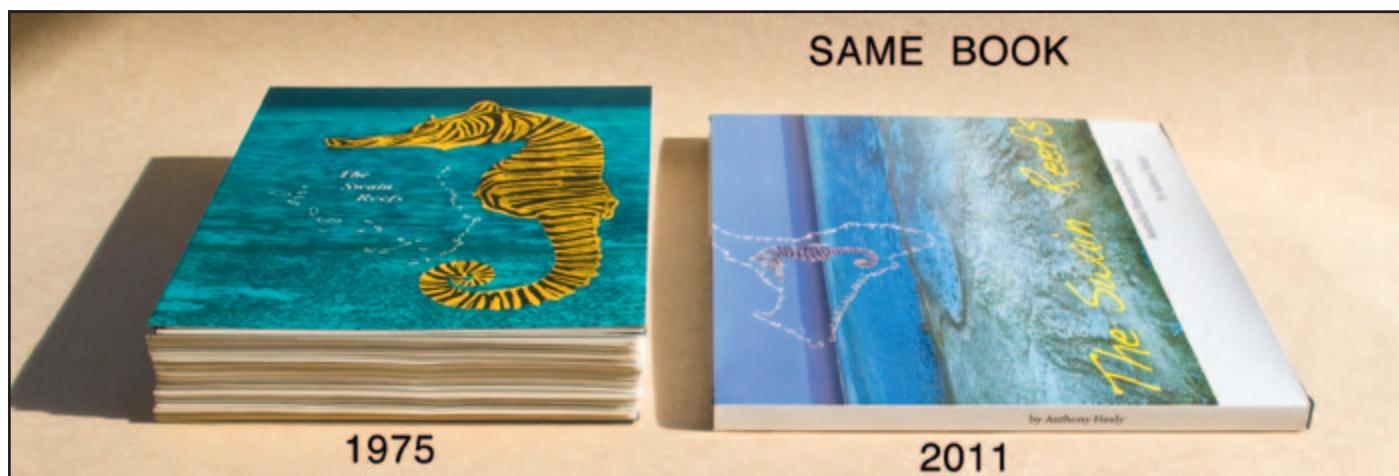
Figure 1

Figure 2: The four coloured images are sitting on top of the ghost image of one of the light poles that are around the square.

To make use of this Blurb template feature, in the case of a circular image having a flattened, white background, by placing it on a white page meant only the circular image was seen and the excess square area merged with the background. (Figs 3A & 3B)

In another instance, I created an image using text with the letters coloured by patterns from one of the Mexican tribes. The background to the text was black and I wanted to use this on the cover of my book. The template cover has special features put there by Blurb that you can't alter. However, it is possible to make the cover background black. By doing this I was able to use the image on the page and the black border merged with the background. The downside of this was that the text boxes, that have been placed on the cover by Blurb, are used to produce the title in black text on the spine of the book, so I lost that feature. (Fig. 4)

Text
The Blurb software can produce only horizontal text. It can be black letters on white or white letters on black and even coloured letters on chosen backgrounds – each character sharp and crisp and isolated on the image but the text will not change from the horizontal. (Fig. 5) For the more creative compiler, there are some ways to overcome this limitation. I wanted a vertical text on the cover of the book. So I changed the rectangle text box, located on the cover template, into a long thin vertical box. I then typed the first letter and hit "return". I typed the next letter and hit "return" again and repeated this until the end of the word. (Fig. 6).

It wasn't until I received the printed book that I realised I could have gone one step further. If I had split the text box into

While I can access all of those fonts with minor restrictions, there are other features that come with the Blurb's BookSmart® application that I can't change. One good feature, however, is that any area of an image box that is not used by a photograph, takes on the colour of the background page, so you don't have to be very accurate in sizing your image template. Photoshop will allow you to isolate a circular object and if you wish to paste it into another image you can save it as a PSD layer and just drag it onto the other image using Photoshop. However, if you wish to have a circular flattened image in your book, you can't do it. As soon as you flatten the image in Photoshop it acquires a background. The default is white but it can be another colour.

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

three, I could have centred the letter "i" in Byzantium. The first part for the letter "t", a second for the "i" and a third for the letters "um". All these could then be aligned using the book software.

One of the many legacies from the Byzantine period includes the magnificent

mosaics we have in various ancient locations. Without any software restriction on font use, I was able to use a font that had the appearance of tessera, the small tiles that are used to make mosaics. An alternative method, if you desire special text over the image, is to create the total image in Photoshop, using the text manipulating

features, then paste the image as a whole into the book's image template.

An extension of this last suggestion is perhaps to make your own font. While attending a community course in calligraphy, our group was presented with an example of a font that looked like Hebrew letters. Being a hoarder, I kept this sheet and photographed various letters. Using Photoshop, I was able to produce the heading I wanted in one of my books that would complement the text at the bottom of the adjacent image. This text was pasted in as an image. (Fig. 7).

One last item, the Blurb templates have a double page option but it has the same problem as with other book templates. A portion of the centre of the image is lost to the binding. I still split the image in half and add 50% gray to the spine edges, as mentioned in the 2009 article, hoping that I can estimate the amount that will be lost when the pages are bound. Still, even with

Figure 6

Figure 7

The great Synagogue on Dohány Street
worshippers. During the war, the Jewis
under the Nazis. On the banks of the D
group of Jews who were ordered to tak
into the river and were then shot. Thes
reminder of the event and votive candl
remembrance. Some people have left b

that inconvenience, it hasn't stopped me from giving Blurb a go. (Fig. 8).

Once your book is uploaded you have various options: Keep it private, which means only you can view it online; tag it so that others can view it by invitation; allow the public to view just 12 pages or make it open to everyone to view. This last option means that all your friends can view it online in its entirety and if anyone so wishes, they can order a copy of it.

Figure 8

DIGIT CHALLENGE – HIGH KEY ARCHITECTURE

Figure 1

Figure 2

I found four problems with photography in the newly renovated Ashmolean Museum – perspective, lighting, distractions and people. Only the last could be dealt with on site, by using patience and waiting for the people to move out of the frame or into the right place. The rest had to be sorted in the computer.

My interest centred on the main staircase, which rises from the basement to the fourth floor through an open atrium. For many of the images, particularly the wide-angle ones, it is impossible to find a shooting position that is square to the subject as one is always pointing the camera up, down, left or right. Most of the light comes in through the glass ceiling and streams down about 80 feet to the lower levels, by which point there is very little light left.

Fig. 1 shows the starting image, straight from the camera, taken in RAW format. Working in Lightroom, I corrected the perspective using the vertical and horizontal transform sliders and then I cropped the image as I wanted. It needed an overall boost to exposure of about half a stop which I should have compensated for in the camera. I then applied a graduated filter, giving an extra two stops exposure to the bottom of the image – **Fig. 2.**

To achieve the high-key effect, I used the tone curve tool in Lightroom, increasing the darks to +40 and the shadows to +60. This reduced the overall contrast so I needed to select the strong contrast preset – **Fig. 3**.

The spot removal tool was used to hide the small box on the wall. Then I used the

adjustment brush to further lighten several of the shadow areas – **Fig. 4**.

Some apparently flat walls had now had as much as three stops correction across the area. Manipulating the histogram this much makes it very important to maintain 16-bit processing throughout. Had I used 8-bit, banding would undoubtedly have been obvious.

For the final adjustments, I switched to Photoshop to work on a few details. In particular I selected the glass panels so that I could bring out the green colour and improve the definition of the rails. I also replaced the small child's head that was just peering over the rails with my wife's head – shown in the Final Image.

Figure 3

Figure 4

All of the other images in my panel were processed in a similar way. Just two of them had major distractions, being spoiled by dark doorways in the background. For these, I admit, I had to create a Photoshop wall but otherwise I have always tried to reproduce exactly what I saw.

This panel illustrates where the border lies between the Pictorial and Creative categories for an ARPS panel. In the Pictorial category, The Society accepts the correction of perspective, contrast, lighting and the removal of minor distractions as long as the truth is not altered significantly. However, as a head was substituted and legs removed (in theory, you could wait till the right head appears, or offending legs disappear) it was felt that this panel crossed the boundary to fall within the Creative Category.
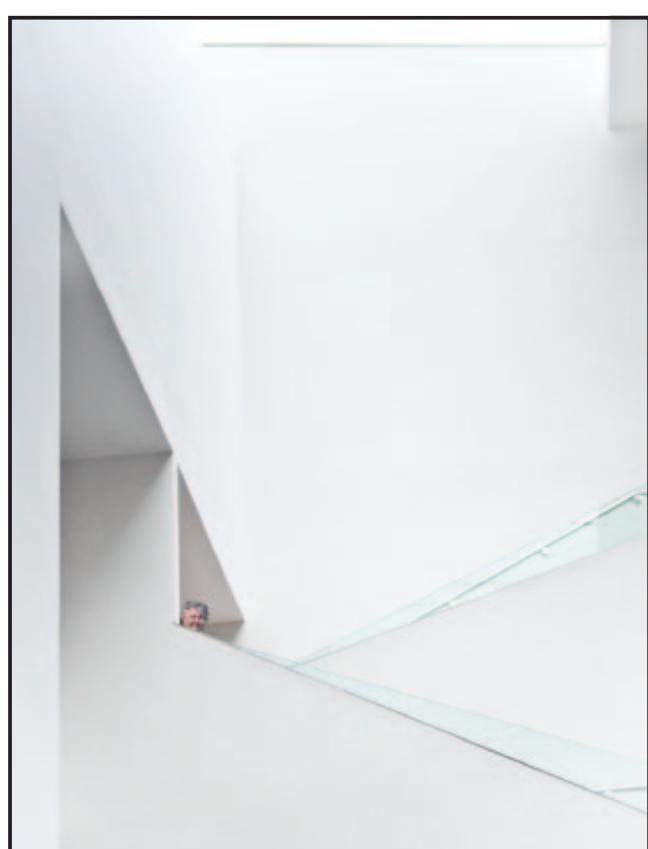
Final image

DIGIT CHALLENGE: WORKING WITH MODELS

Mon Amour processed final
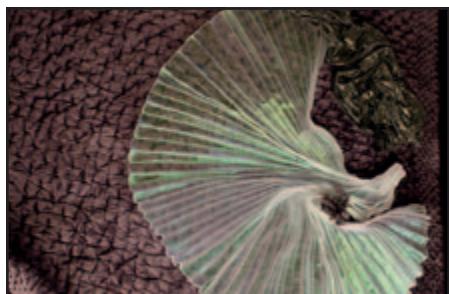
Mon Amour building the image 1

Mon Amour building the image 2
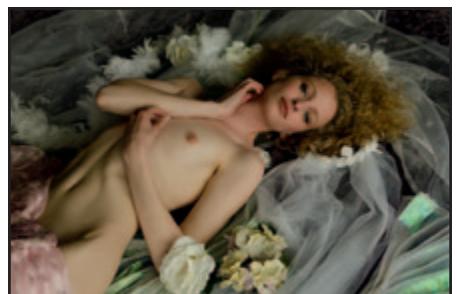
Final image as shot

Three years ago I would have said 'I don't shoot people' but interestingly that is now exactly what I love doing best.

A workshop got me started and out of my discomfort zone. I work primarily with both professional photographic models and people who dress up in crazy costumes. Each requires a different approach – the professional model being far easier to work with.

When shooting a professional model, either on location or in a studio, you need to plan both your time and place to some extent. The model needs to know the type of work you want to do so that they can bring appropriate clothes or accessories if they have them. You need to know if you are aiming at producing soft elegant images or edgy work that challenges the viewer.

These determine the lighting you need for one thing and possibly how you will work throughout the day.

Talk to your model about what you are aiming to produce. It is a team effort and she (or he) needs to understand the mood they should convey and how to position their body for best effect. A good model understands the light source and the interplay with body shapes. If you have a less experienced model then you need to instruct them carefully to achieve the result you require.

The accompanying image *Mon Amour* is an example of working with a professional model. I started by laying out the floor and positioning the stepladder from which I would shoot, so that the natural light from the window would go across the body. We

knew we wanted a soft elegant output, so the soft natural lighting was good.

I added more accessories as we went along. A WiFi connection transmitted jpeg images to my iPad so we could make a critical assessment after every 4 or 5 shots. This was far more satisfactory than viewing the back of the camera. After a little discussion we changed the accessories or the position of the model. By repeating this, we worked through the session, improving minute details as we went, till we both felt we had achieved our aims. What comes out of camera is never my ultimate image. At the point of shooting I pretty much know how I will process the scene for the end result I want – in this case a light sensual feel, whilst keeping the style firmly towards art nude and not glamour.
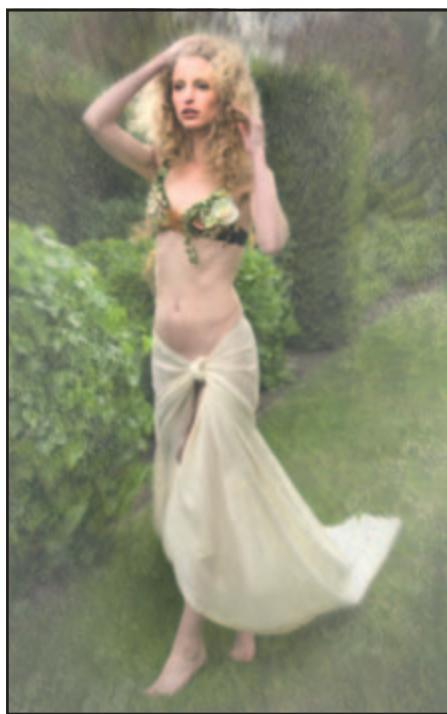
Walk in the Park processed final

Non professional models require more hard work from the photographer to get good results but having enthusiastic individuals helps a lot. My *Harley Quinn* lady was at a fantasy costume festival and was totally up for fun.

We simply messed around for a while as I had less control over the situation and could not be sure of my end output. The more fun we had the more she relaxed and we were both pleased with the end result.

Joker was asked to leap off a ledge and look menacing, which he fulfilled with gusto. So keeping them moving gave more natural results just as it did with the *Walk in the Park*.

I aim for the best results in camera as even though I inevitably do quite a lot of post-processing I firmly believe that it is a case of garbage in equals garbage out.

So my challenge to you, especially those of you who maintain you are uncomfortable shooting people, is to give it a go. Know what you want your end output to be. Get your model relaxed; talk to them and give them a vision of what you want to achieve. Work with them as a team and you will both be happy with the results.

Working on the floor means fairly static positions so next we moved outdoors for the *Walk in the Park*. Here I shot the model while walking towards me in order to keep a natural look. A moving person will always feel more comfortable than when static. I counted the model in and she walked slowly towards me. The wind caught her hair and skirt as you can see in the second shot down the film strip. So she quickly adapted by lowering part of the skirt and flicking her hair straight whilst continuing towards me. In the final frame, the wind caught her hair again so she lifted her hands to hold it back. This I felt gave me the more natural look that I was seeking. My vision was for a painterly soft focus look, so Photoshop processing helped me achieve this output.

Harley as shot

Film strip

Harley Quinn processed final

PAUL JOHNSON, LRPS

DIGIT CHALLENGE: TO CREATE IMAGES IN THE STYLE OF AN OLD MASTER PAINTING

Figure 1   Eilean Donan processed in Photoshop

Figure 2   Eilean Donan with filter, image and layer stacks in Perfect Effects

Figure 3   Eilean Donan with the final three filters in Perfect Effects

In January 2014, I spent a week with two friends taking photographs in the Torridon region of Scotland. We visited several locations and I came home with a few reasonably composed landscape images. The question was what to do with them? In particular, the composition of two images reminded me of traditional landscape paintings, so I decided to explore ways to post process them in the style of an old master.

Starting with the RAW image of Eilean Donan Castle, some basic adjustments were made in Adobe Camera Raw (ACR); applying the lens correction, adjusting the exposure, highlights, black point, white point, and adding a little clarity and targeted sharpening. The file was then opened in Photoshop CS6 as a Smart Object so it could be re-opened in ACR to make ready adjustments if necessary.

A Shadows and Highlights layer was applied to the smart object to balance the darker and lighter areas of the image followed by a High Pass layer to give some subtle overall sharpening. This basic work was completed by adding Levels, Curves and Vibrance adjustment layers. Finally, as the top edge of the sky was a little bright, a narrow gradient was applied via a blank layer using Soft Light blend mode and the opacity adjusted as needed (Fig. 1).

As a photograph, the image looked all right but it was not as I envisioned. So the question was what to do next?

I had recently purchased the OnOne's Perfect Photo Suite 9 which has plug-ins embedded in Photoshop CS6. The suite comprises a number of modules, one of which, Perfect Effects, has numerous filters which can be layered on top of each other. Having watched several of OnOne's excellent video tutorials, it seemed that Perfect Effects could provide the means of creating the image I wanted.

The layered PSD file was saved and a flattened copy of the image was imported into Perfect Effects via File, Automate in CS6.

The Perfect Effects desktop comprises three zones: in the centre is the image, on the left hand side are the filters and on the right hand side are the layer stack and multiple filter adjustments. There are twenty-five or so filter groups each containing a number of filters, so more than 200 or 300 filters in total. As a filter is selected it appears in the layer stack and, by adding layers, more filters can be applied.

Each filter can be modified individually and the opacity of each layer adjusted giving
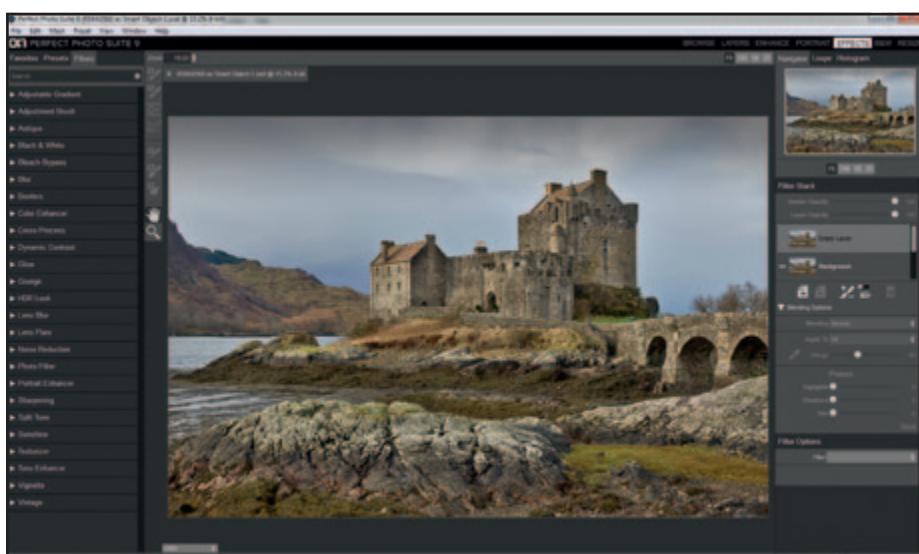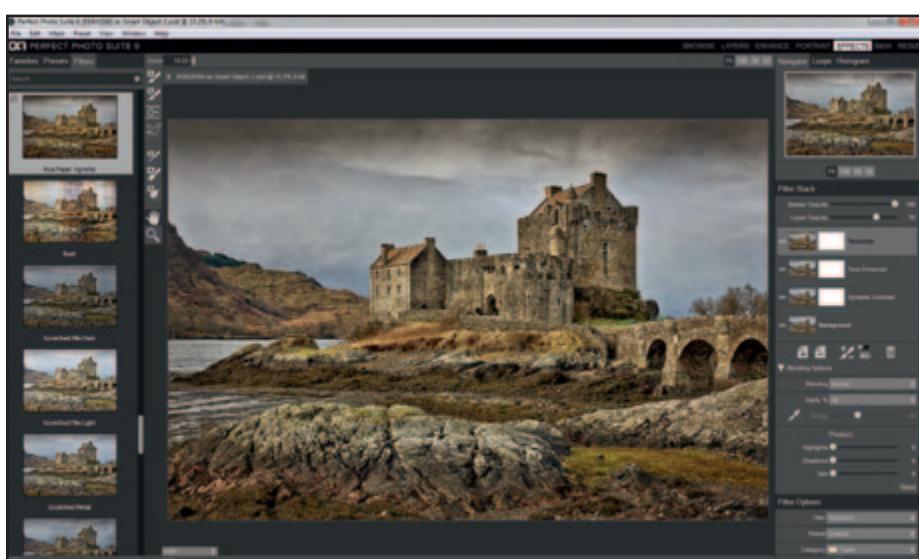
infinite control over the effect on the image (Fig. 2).

So began the experiment. After much trial and error, as so often is the case, suddenly something special appeared. The application of a particular combination of filters and adjustments created the basis of an Old Master style (Fig. 3). For this particular image, the filters applied were Dynamic Contrast – Natural; Tone Enhancer – Tonal Contrast at 50% opacity and Texturiser – Rice Paper Vignette at 70% opacity. Together, they sharpened the detail in the walls, grasses and rocks, added vibrance and texture overall but, in particular, to the sky. The vignette held the image together and added to the painterly feel (Fig. 3).

The image was saved back into Photoshop CS6 where it sat as a layer above the original flattened image. It looked a bit dark and a little flat so Levels and Curves adjustment layers were added to brighten and improve the contrast. The image was cropped to size and a black stroke added to the outer edge, resulting in the finished image EILEAN DONAN CASTLE (Fig. 4).

Having created the style, the process was repeated, with a few adjustments, to the second image TORRIDON TREE (Fig. 5).

Where appropriate, variations of this process have been applied on other images, including ANOTHER PLACE, which was selected for the 2015 Digital Imaging Group's Annual Print Exhibition (Fig. 6). Taken mid-afternoon on Crosby Beach, the objective was to capture a snapshot of the one hundred Antony Gormley figures against the backdrop of the wind turbines. The corroded, life sized cast iron figures are covered in barnacles to varying degrees depending on the length of time each spends under water. This image was created from the viewpoint of one of the figures.

Having selected the image from some 200 shots, the RAW file was processed in Adobe Camera Raw and opened in Photoshop CS6. I decided to crop the image to include the principle figure and two others stretching out into the sea and three groups of three wind turbines on the horizon. As the turbines on the right were misaligned, in order to improve the composition, I replaced them with a copy of the turbines on the left. I then opened the image in On One's Perfect Effects 9 and applied a textured layer, toned to reflect the rusty nature of the main figure. The finished image was tidied up in Photoshop CS6.

To complement the style of all the above images, they were printed on Permajet's Smooth Art Silk inkjet paper.

Figure 4   EILEAN DONAN, Dornie, Kyle of Lochalsh, Scotland – Final image

Figure 5   TORRIDON TREE, Loch Torridon, Scotland – Final Image

Figure 6   ANOTHER PLACE, Final Image, accepted in the DIG Print Exhibition 2015

DIGIT CHALLENGE: SENSUAL LADY – SMOKE PHOTOGRAPHY
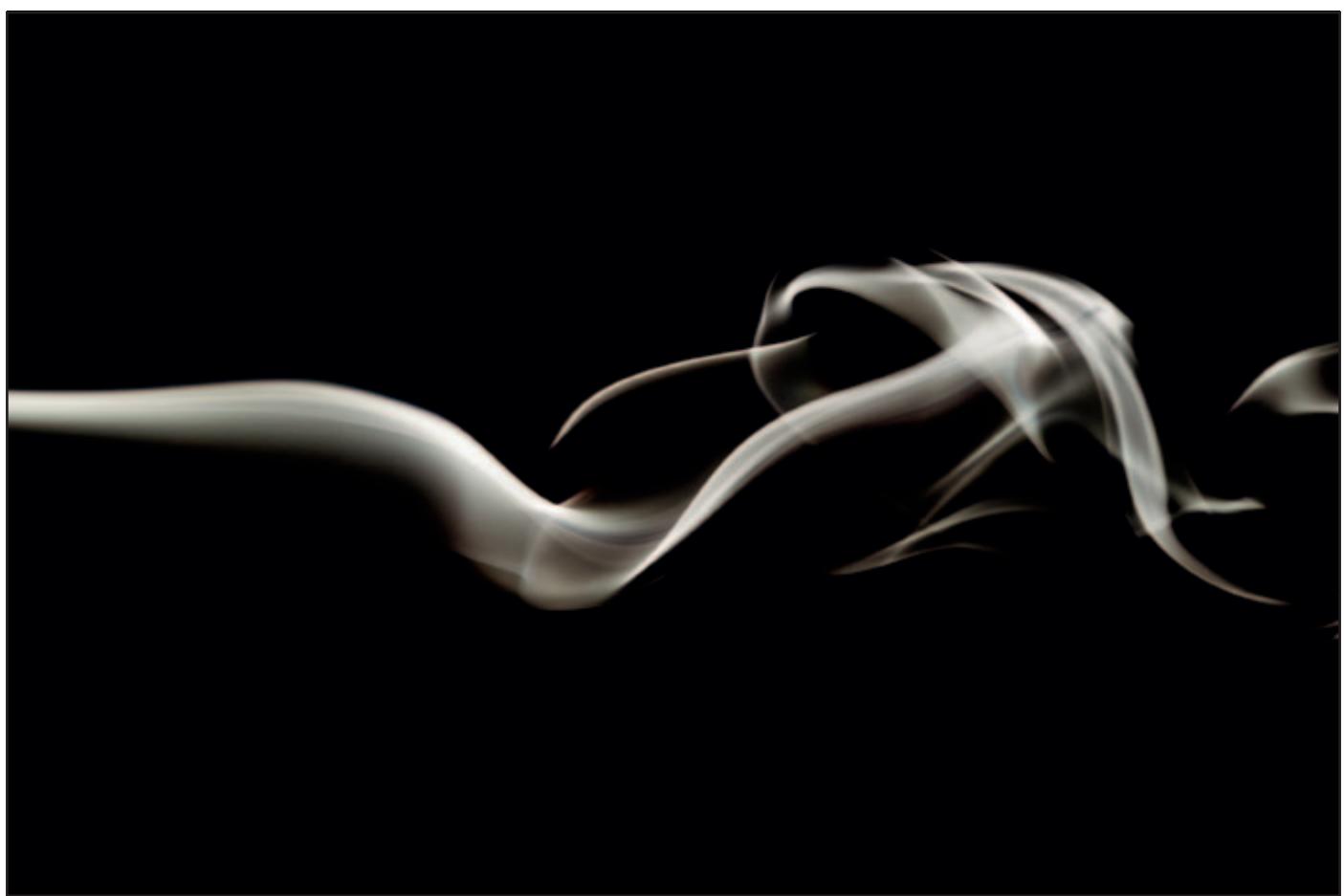
Final mono image

This was my first attempt at smoke photography (aided by my friend and fellow DIG member Lindsey Dade LRPS, who showed me the set up) so I feel lucky to have got at least one image that I could do something with, although it was purely a fluke.

The basic set-up is straightforward; dark background, a flash and source of smoke (jostick) with the camera on a tripod. (see Fig. 1)

We chose a sunny and hot day with the blinds down but it would be better at night!

The great thing with smoke is that every image is different. I had to experiment with numerous exposures before I got the one that seemed to work. This particular one was shot at 1/320 sec, f/6.3, ISO 100 with a tethered flash.
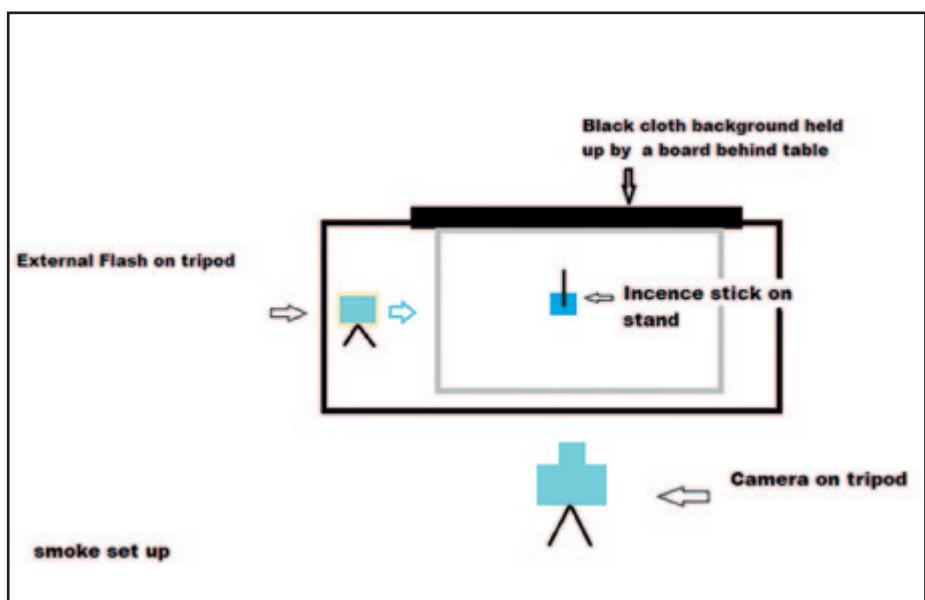
Figure 1 Smoke set up diagram

Figure 2 Raw image

Figure 3 Smoke Swatches layer
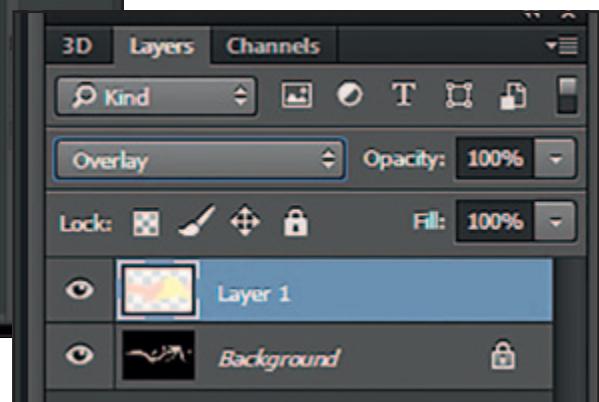
Figure 4 Blending mode

Final colour image

Looking at the RAW file, it wasn't until I rotated it that I discovered it resembled the female form lying with a shawl over her shoulder. I cleaned up the image in Photoshop Camera RAW, removing any light patches by adjusting the contrast, shadows, whites, blacks and highlights until I was happy with the blackness of the background and the detail of the smoke.

A little extra clarity and sharpening were also added. This can also easily be done in Lightroom. (See Fig. 2)

Once back in Photoshop, the image was cropped to get rid of the tip of the jostick and shorten what would be the leg. I also added a little warmth by using a platinum curve pre-set that I made but a similar effect could be made with toning pre-sets either in Lightroom or Silver Efex Pro 2. And that was it.

I then decided to experiment with colouring the smoke. I tried using the adjustment brush in Lightroom by painting on colour but it didn't quite have the effect I wanted. There are many tutorials on the internet with advice on colouring smoke in post production and so I tried one out. My version was based on this YouTube tutorial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCc6ZcphzUY

In Photoshop, I made a duplicate layer, picked two colours from the Swatch and painted them on using the brush tool (see Fig. 3). Then magic happened when I changed the blending mode to 'Overlay'; the blocks of colour then disappeared and just the smoke was affected. (see Fig. 4).

I then had to clean up the colours from the lower half of the image using the eraser tool, where I had been overzealous with the brush! Personally I still prefer the mono version but it was a useful experiment.

DIGIT CHALLENGE: APPLE PEEL EFFECT

These days I try to create all my images from an idea, dream or surreal inspiration. Sometimes the idea comes from an image taken with the general intention of it being added to a collection of interesting snippets for future use in a composition. Sometimes it comes by setting out to take a shot that represents an idea.

In this case, the N*ot All There* man originated from a shot of a cabaret performer in Cuba. He had wrappings on his arms that reminded me of the drawings of Escher,

Jaume Montserrat and others. I thought that this would make an interesting start point to try out the process of cutting away a body to create an apple-peel effect. I believe that the way to learn new techniques is to try them out and then practise and refine.

The original shot was taken at a shaky 1/6 second, hand held at 6400 ISO with dodgy stage lighting to correct.

The process of cutting away part of an image is straightforward, but I found it quite challenging to visualise where to make the cuts in order to produce a realistic image. It was interesting to decide on the treatment of the reverse of the peel and how this should be interpreted. The lighting to be applied to the rim of the cuts and internal shadows was also more interesting for me to think about than for my average picture.

All of this was simply painted in with dark and light in the same way as any other shadowing, or dodge and burn, but the challenge was to imagine how the light would fall.

I think that if/when I do something similar again, I would open up the spiral further for more emphasis.

Having completed the main component, it then remained to simply choose a suitable background and create a tableau with an implied dialogue between the players. Once all the elements were in position, the whole was adjusted for contrast, colour and levels.

The back wall came from an ancient church near my house and a floor which needed some perspective work. The straight clown shot came from the same evening of entertainment. A productive show one way and another!
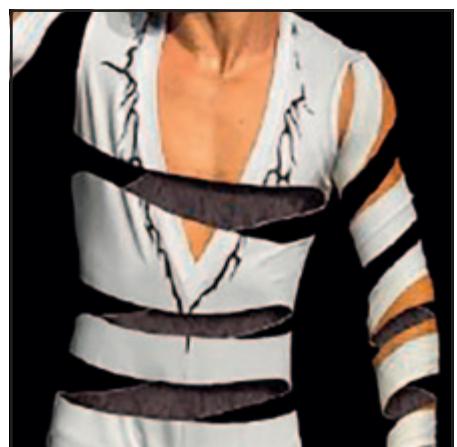
FROM IMAGE TO SKETCH

People who would like to draw but are scared to try, can convert their digital photos to pencil sketches, watercolour, charcoal, or pastel drawings with AKVIS Sketch. It's main strength, however, can be found when applied to images with a strong design element, as Palli Gajree, Hon FRPS, demonstrates.

Sketch is one of a number of plug-ins available from AKVIS. It allows variations in tonal range and texture of standard digital images. It has versions for both Mac and Windows platforms and is particularly suited to architectural images or similar photos with a strong design element. Of course you can experiment with other subjects to ascertain whether or not you get the desired result.

I became interested in Sketch when I read a review in an issue of the Photographic Society of America *Journal*, which sounded quite promising and interesting. I therefore decided to download their free 10-day trial version to check it out.

Needless to add that I was very happy with the results and went on to buy Version 14, which I'm currently using. .

After opening your image in Photoshop, go to Filter/Akvis Sketch and your window changes to that seen in Fig. 1. This shows a series of icons across the top of the frame and I have selected the 'Advanced' option.

Across the top of the image pane are the 'Before' and 'After' options for that window. In Fig.1 the window is showing the normal image under the heading of 'Before'. On the right hand side of the window you have three palettes: 1) Navigator; 2) a series of sliders to adjust the variations available for the image and 3) option to save the settings as a preset.

Click on the small icon in the top left hand corner of the image window to bring up a floating panel – Fig. 2. The panel can be
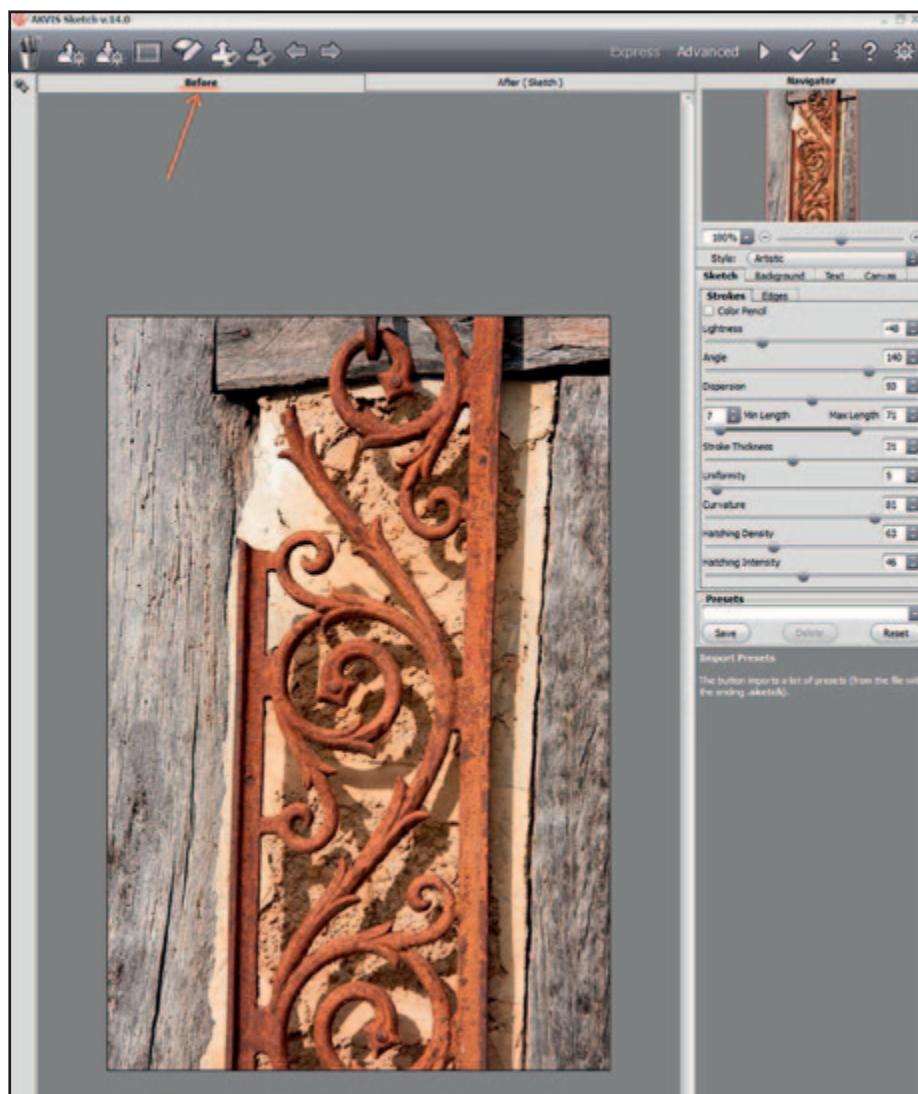
Figure 1

Top: Figure 2; Bottom: Figure 3
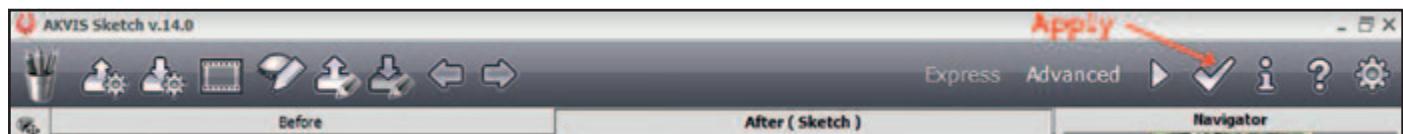
Figure 4

moved around to show the results of the slider changes on various parts of the image. To see the results of the changes on the full image just click on the 'After' heading. Fig. 3. You can move back and forth between before and after until you are satisfied with your results.

Once you have completed the variations you can apply the changes to your image by clicking on the large tick in the top right tool area – Fig. 4. You can then return to Photoshop and make further corrections and additions if desired.

Should you feel the results are something you are likely to use on other images, the settings can be saved as a preset by clicking on the 'Save' button in the preset palette.

Fig. 5 shows the finished result of fine tuning the effects and the addition of a frame.

In May 2015, AKVIS announced the release of AKVIS Sketch Version 17 both for Windows and Mac. It provides many improvements and new features. The new *Cross-hatching* option is now available in the Artistic style, which turns photos into colour drawings and black-and-white sketches. Again, it is possible to explore the new software by downloading AKVIS Sketch V. 17 for a free 10-day trial period. There are a number

of tutorials available at http://akvis.com/ en/sketch-tutorial/howwork/index.php as well as a number of examples on not only

Sketch but other products by AKVIS at http://www.youtube.com/user/AKVISvideo/ videos?flow=grid&view=57

Figure 5

IN PREVIOUS ISSUES

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