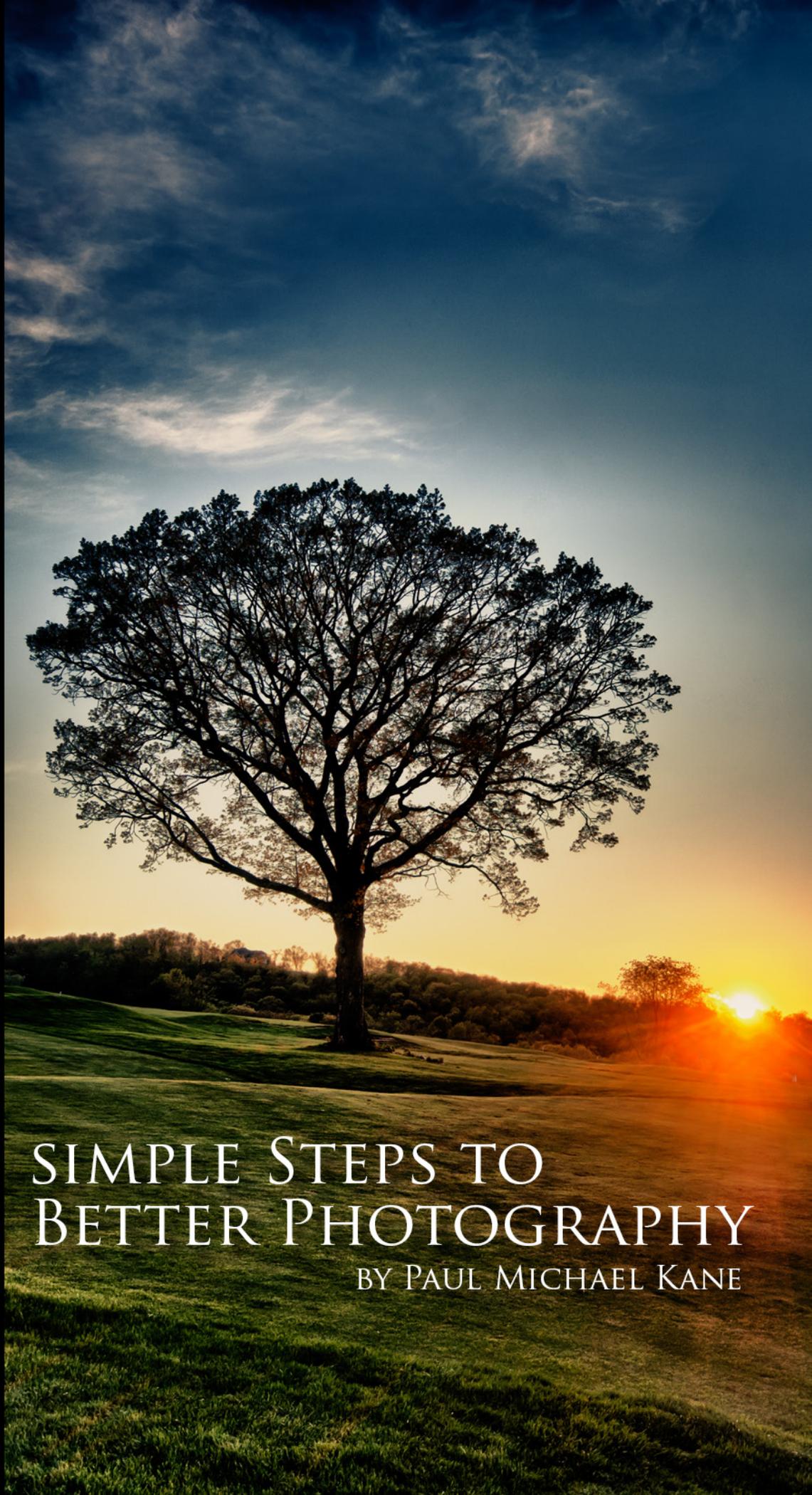


10

SIMPLE STEPS TO  
BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY

BY PAUL MICHAEL KANE



# one - on - one

with Paul Michael Kane



Are you frustrated by your new camera and want to figure out how to get the great shots? Looking to take your photography to the next level? Spend some quality, one-on-one time with award winning photographer, Paul Michael Kane. Not only will your shots improve, but his passion for all things photography, will inspire your images *and* your vision.

Whether you're a casual point and shoot photographer or you have the latest and greatest in DSLR gear, Paul's instruction is universal in it's application.

Paul's areas of expertise include, but are not limited to:

- Portrait
- Architecture
- Automotive
- Historic Locations
- Star Trails/Moon Shots
- Landscape
- Wildlife
- Still Life
- Fireworks
- Lightning

Some of the up-to-date software you can experience during your time with Paul:

- Photoshop
- Lightroom
- NIK Software's Photo Suite
- OnOne Software's Photo Suite
- Facebook for Photographers
- Google+ for Photographers



Session minimums are two hours and can go as long as a full 8 hours. These are customizable sessions and are priced in a tiered structure to accommodate beginners or more experienced shooters.

**Basic:** \$30 an hour or \$200 for a full day

**Beyond Basic:** \$50 an hour or \$350 for a full day

Book your private, one-on-one sessions today as space is limited and filled on a first come, first serve basis.

Contact Paul at [paul@pmkane.com](mailto:paul@pmkane.com).



PAUL MICHAEL KANE PHOTOGRAPHY

# Introduction

I've been a photographer for more years than I'd care to admit. Actually no, wait a second, let me rephrase that . . . I have been taking photos for more years than I'd care to admit. You see, while I have always loved taking pictures – capturing and processing images – that doesn't necessarily qualify me as a "photographer," in the same way that a person who plays a little guitar is not automatically classified as a "musician". You see, there is a higher level of expertise required to describe people in certain categories pertaining to their skill set. My personal interest in the arts has always been so broad that I've never truly mastered any one medium. While I have dabbled in photography, as well as painting, illustration, graphic design, writing and music, and have somehow managed to make a career for myself incorporating all of these art forms, I still don't really consider myself a true master at any of them.

I'm not ashamed of this realization, nor am I necessarily proud of it. But I do feel somewhat lazy when I compare myself to certain individuals who have gone the extra mile and have taken the steps necessary to advance their craft, and their knowledge of their own chosen medium, to a higher level. Paul Michael Kane is one such artist.

I first became aware of Paul's work when he submitted photos to *Weird NJ* for consideration for a possible magazine cover image. We ultimately decided to go with an image other than Paul's, for reasons too involved to go into here. But I was so impressed with his photos that I visited his web site, where I found a vast

- array of extremely impressive work. The images were eye-popping, to say the least – dramatic and powerful, highly stylized and with great attention paid to detail. It was pretty clear that this guy was no point and shoot hobbyist, he was a pro, and he really knew what he was doing.

- Yes, the images are incredibly impressive from a technical standpoint, but more importantly, they are visually inspired – and inspiring. It's obvious that as an artist Paul has achieved exactly what he set out to do in each image, aesthetically. I have never been one to laud technique over content. I believe that a technical novice with a disposable camera and a good eye can be far more artistically creative than a well-trained artisan with expensive photographic equipment. Paul, however, is one of those rare artists who is fortunate enough to possess both staggering technical expertise, and a really unique and individual vision. His pictures capture a world of his own creation, and the viewer is enticed to explore this stunning environment through the artist's eyes.

- As much as I like to believe that I too am somewhat successful as a picture taker, when I look at Paul's work I realize that I still have a lot to learn. I believe that no matter how experienced you may consider yourself as a photographer, we can all still learn more and grow creatively through sharing the wisdom and insights of others. I know that there is a thing or two (or ten) that Paul Michael Kane could teach me about photography...and most likely you too.

– Mark Moran, Publisher, *Weird NJ* Magazine

# Thanks

Rarely in life is anyone solely responsible for their own successes. I am very fortunate to be surrounded by a great number of people who generously offer their support, guidance, encouragement and love.

I'd very much like to thank Mark Moran for not only contributing the wonderful introduction you see above, but for also offering me the opportunity of seeing my work published within the pages of *Weird NJ* Magazine. For years, local fans of my work have asked if I'd ever done anything with the magazine - a true New Jersey treasure. The release of their newest edition - Issue number 40 - represents the beginning of my proud work with *Weird NJ*. Stay tuned for more on that!

To my wife, Heather, and my beautiful daughter, Peyton Marie . . . I am so happy that I get to share this journey with you both. Heather, your encouragement strengthens me in ways no other can. When I am full of my neurotic, self-induced doubt, you provide the simple reason to continue to press on. Peyton, you've turned me into the person I've always wanted to be. Watching you grow into the young woman you've become is an adventure I could only have imagined.

# 10 KNOWLEDGE

promise you, this will be the most difficult step in the book – and as hard a pill as it will be to swallow, it’s an essential one. Every student I’ve ever trained or newcomer to photography who has sought my guidance gets this little piece of advice. The first simple step to better photography is to read your camera’s manual – from cover to cover.

Stay with me on this, please . . . I know you want to get to the good stuff. Just hear me out on this . . .

Every camera nowadays comes with a manual the size of a small paperback novel. Cameras have become a lot more complicated than they used to be – and that’s saying a lot! Not only do we as photographers have to deal with f-stops and apertures, but also file formats, sensor sizes, crop factors and the like. It’s a grueling read – no doubt penned by someone who enjoys inflicting their own personal brand of boredom on the world. It is designed to challenge even the most tech savvy of us all, but it’s an integral part of the learning curve – even if you’ve owned a camera already – each new model brings with it some unique functions that only reading the manual will introduce you to.

When I read a camera manual, I like to have a few things next to me – the camera – of course. Also one of those small notebooks that fits so well in any camera bag; then a pen and finally, a highlighter.

Being able to memorize the layout of all the buttons on your camera or even how to customize certain buttons – *do you bracket a lot of your shots? Why not customize the f1 button on your camera to instantly turn on a 3-stop bracket – what exactly does that “P” Mode mean on your command dial* – this intimate knowledge of your camera only comes from reading your manual.

Knowing your camera’s limits is also a benefit from studying your manual. How does your camera function in cold weather – how about searing hot temperatures? How many shots per second does your shutter fire? Does it fire faster if set to JPG rather than RAW? Can your little pop-up flash function as a commander and fire a larger, more powerful light source like an off-camera hot shoe flash?

My manuals look like a well read, cherished novel – full of Post-It notes, highlighted passages and dog eared pages. And they are now tossed into the back of a drawer in my studio – their bits of wisdom having become second nature to me. And here’s the thing . . . once you’ve read the manuals, it’s time to ditch them and begin the process of playing to learn. We’re all shooting digital, right? Well, most of us are and we’re no longer confined to 24 or 36 shot film rolls. We can experiment – or what I call play – till our hearts content. The beauty of photography nowadays is that we know instantly if we’ve got it right.

If you’re still with me after my first step – the fun begins after the page turn.

And if you can’t find the resolve to plow through one of these manuals - and honestly, who would blame you – you’re in luck. Some of the bigger model DSLR cameras are often the subjects of books written by actual working photographers and not some over-analytical optical engineer. Have a look at David Busch’s site ([www.dslrguides.com](http://www.dslrguides.com)) and you just might find your model DSLR.

There’s also an extensive Recommended Reading section at the end of this book chock full of many of the titles I’ve read in preparation for my photographic journey. More on those in that respective chapter – some really good stuff there. Now let’s get to the fun stuff!



Camera makers like Nikon and Canon offer up their camera manuals in iPhone and iPad apps. The apps allow you to also highlight portions of the text for note taking, have searchable content and, often times, links to examples of techniques explained in the manual. There are also growing a number of 3rd party apps for specific cameras available.

#### Above: **Shutter**

Shot with the Nikon D5100 with the 18-55mm at f/36 for 10 full seconds at an ISO of 100. Processed in Lightroom.

#### Far Right: **Love to Read**

Shot with the Nikon D2x with a 50mm prime, 1.8 at 1/30th of a second with an ISO of 100. Processed in NIK Software’s HDR Efex Pro 1.0.



# 9

# INSPIRATION

Ok, this is where the fun begins. Drawing inspiration from everything around you - types of music . . . the color of a particular flower . . . the way the light falls on a lone, solitary chair in an empty room . . . Inspiration is a sure fire way to get yourself shooting better images.

I take inspiration from all sorts of things. I study painters like Gerhard Richter - who made a name for himself creating still-life of everyday objects. Richter's series on the ordinary is where I drew inspiration for the shot on the following page - a simple arrow-back chair captured at historic Fort Mifflin, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, just south of the airport.

There's a wonderful book written by Austin Kleon called *Steal Like An Artist*. It was on the New York Times Bestseller list for very good reason and its contents apply not only to artists, but photographers, designer, musicians . . . really, anyone who is a creative professional.

The title sounds a bit ruthless, but it's actually referring to discovering your inspiration and how all creative work builds on what has come before - the notion that there's nothing new in the world anymore. And while that, again, sounds harsh, it's not meant to be taken as a negative. We all build on what inspires us and strive to turn that vision into something that becomes synonymous with our individual style.

Music inspires me - especially during the post-processing portion of my workflow. You can't beat a film score by Hans Zimmer when working on these gritty, grungy places I love to shoot.

Movies inspire me - The big one was, of course, *Star Wars*. Most kids of my generation were enraptured by droids, Jedi and Darth Vader . . . but for me, it went beyond the story. The 'making-of' is what really inspired me, from conceptual artists to the movie's model makers. These were creative people applying their amazing skills to help define a solitary vision - George Lucas' vision of a galaxy set a long time ago and far, far away. I am a huge sucker for sunset shots because of that one scene where Luke is gazing off to the twin suns setting on Tatooine . . . still gets to me all these years later!

And, of course, other photographers inspire me. Shooters like Jeremy Cowart and the work he does with Help Portrait - a global community of photographers coming together to use their photography skills to give back to their local community . . . or David DuChemin and his emotive, international humanitarian photography. There are pioneers in the industry like John Paul Caponigro and Vincent Versace who I've had the honor of seeing speak at several events across the country. Their dedication and innovation constantly make me strive to be better.

My subjects also inspire me; whether I am shooting a historic location or a professional model, I feed off the creative energy coming through my lens. Photographing a model is a collaborative process by its very nature - there are two creative individuals at work - one behind the camera and one in front - both who desire to turn out some amazing images.

So the simplest step to getting better images is to find some inspiration . . . and don't be afraid to emulate another's style when you start out. We all begin somewhere . . . it's the journey that defines our creative endeavors. Begin yours today!



*I have a little wish book . . . it's a digital one I keep on my phone and iPad. It's full of shots from other image makers - stuff I have yet to try or places I've been meaning to get to. I guess you could call it my photographic bucket list. The longer I keep doing kind of work, you'd think that list would get shorter. Not at all, in fact, the more I do this, the more I get inspired, the more images I have in my wish book!*

Above: **Tara Rose**

Shot with the Nikon D2x with the 70-200mm at f/8 for 1/250th of a seconds at an ISO of 100. Processed in Lightroom and Silver Efex Pro.

Far Right: **Chair, Fort Mifflin**

Shot with the Nikon D5100 with a 18-55mm at f/5 at 1/25th of a second with an ISO of 100. Processed in Lightroom and NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 1.0.



# 8

# COMPOSITION

There are some basic rules to photography that'll have you shooting better images rather quickly. I'll go over some of them here. But there's also one thing I want you to remember: Rules were made to be broken - and I break them every chance I can get. But it's important to know which rules you are breaking and to have a good reason why you are breaking them.

The big rule you'll find a lot of photography pros quoting is the 'Rule of Thirds'. This rule stipulates that nothing should be placed dead center within your composition. Visualize a tic-tac-toe grid over your shot. The ideal location to place the focus of your image is at the point of one or more of those intersecting lines. This is a very good rule, but not one you always have to follow - take the lion on the next page for example.

*King No More* is an image that breaks the Rule of Thirds. The lion's head is dead center in the shot. However, when you're photographing a subject that can gaze back at you, the eyes are crucial to getting a good shot, so you'll want to make sure they are your main point of focus. So if you further analyze the image, you'll notice his eyes are on one of the thirds. While I've broken the Rule of Thirds by centering the lion's head, I still managed to acknowledge the rules in some small way. Makes for a very compelling image, I think.

Patterns are a great rule to follow. The human eye loves patterns and symmetry. We are hard wired to seek them out and are immediately drawn to them. So when you're out composing your shots, look for naturally occurring patterns. The best way to make a pattern shot more interesting is to *break* that pattern. Picture this . . . a chess board with a line of black pawns running across the squares. Now replace one of those black pawns with a white one. Changing this one element creates a story out of the image. It breaks a pattern and makes the image a little more compelling.

There is one rule that I stick to as it is an important one and critical to my own style of shooting. It's all about Viewpoint. That is, of course, the way you shoot your images; or where your camera is when you compose your shot. Let's use an automobile as an example as a car is easy to picture in your mind's eye. If we walk up close to a car and snap a shot, we have a photograph of a car that nearly everyone is familiar with. Why? Because that's generally how we see a car - from our own point of view. Now, grab a step ladder - doesn't even have to be a very tall one. Climb to the very top step and shoot down at the car - NOW we've changed our perspective and created a much more interesting photograph as we're presenting an image that we don't generally get to see in life. Another example is when you're photographing children. As taller adults, we look down upon our children . . . if, as a photographer, we get below the child and shoot up at them; we're giving our viewers a much different perspective and a more compelling shot.

I am often heard saying that when you put your camera where most people can't . . . or won't . . . that's when you start making shots people will marvel over.

The most important rule is to experiment with your compositions. Don't just take one or two shots. Take a dozen from one vantage point, and then take a dozen more from a totally different perspective. Take advantage of the fact that we can fire off dozens - or hundreds - of digital shots and experiment with your composition - you'll never know whether an idea will work until you try it.



*The image above is a simple shot but quick to catch the eyes of a viewer. This image has both a pattern and symmetrical elements that we're drawn to. The pegs of the coat hangers create a repeating pattern, which are broken up by the crutches. The crutches themselves create a pleasing symmetry within the image.*

#### Above: **Crutches**

Shot with the Nikon D5100 with a 18-55mm at f/5.6 at 1/80th of a second with an ISO of 100. Processed in Lightroom and NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 1.0.

#### Far Right: **King No more**

Shot with the Nikon D2x with the 70-200mm at f/2.8 at 1/250th of a second with an ISO of 100. Processed in Adobe Lightroom.



# 7

# VISION

Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others. That was said by author Jonathan Swift. He wrote Gulliver's Travels. It is how I strive to define my photographic work - taking unconventional subjects and showcasing their intrinsic beauty. These are things most people would pass by and not give a single thought to - but seen through my eye - or my camera's lens - will give them pause and make them look deeper.

So this tip is all about taking a second look at the world around you . . . to find the beauty in the simple or the mundane . . . to take chances with your photography. It's only in taking those chances that we succeed.

Take the image on the next page. That's a Ford GT. I had never photographed a sports car before - ever! When I was asked to contribute to a book called *Ford GT: The Complete Owners Experience*, my first impulse was to say "thanks, but no." I mean my experience with automotive photography was nil. But - and I have to thank my wife for this - I didn't turn down the job and approached the project with a fresh attitude. I shot these cars as only I could envision them. The project was a huge success and the private commissions for automotive photography I've gotten since then have been very rewarding.

It doesn't have to be all about a professional gig, mind you. Take the bolts you see on this page. This image won first place for a photo competition with an "Antique/Junk" theme. All it took was the vision to see where a shot of two simple bolts could be taken artistically. The bolts were on this big, old earth moving vehicle and just a part of the whole subject, but when you can narrow your vision down, see the parts of the whole - that's when you'll get some really nifty shots.

Here is a great exercise to help you achieve some vision. I use this when I get stuck in a creative rut. It's a simple step in narrowing the scope of your vision and seeing the world in a different way.

Find a place where you can hang out for a while - it could be a city park or maybe a library or better yet, your own back yard. Grab your camera and one lens - make it your best lens - I always pick the 50mm prime 1.4. Now find a place to sit down and don't move. Take as many pictures as you can while stationary - you'll be amazed at what you come up with. The details you'll start seeing in the world around you. It's a wonderful exercise that'll have you seeing the world in a whole new way.

Speaking of vision - there's a concept that I call pre-visualization. It's a term I've stolen for my own use from the motion picture industry. There, it means storyboarding or simple computer generated scenes to help the director convey his vision.

I've taken it and changed its meaning for my photography. When I see a scene or a subject in front of me, I am able to see where I can take that image in post-production, so I am pre-visualizing my final image before I am even taking a shot. This is especially helpful when doing high-dynamic range photography or shooting with a camera converted to the infrared spectrum. These are techniques that don't allow you to see the finished image until you get the files into your computer and run them through your editing suite of choice.

So when you're out and about, gaze upon the world with fresh eyes . . . hone in on the overlooked and that's when you'll find some truly unique photographic treasures!



*Defining your vision is one of the hardest things to do. But understand that it is an ever evolving process. As new techniques and innovative technologies advance, so should your vision. I've recently discovered Neutral Density filters - these things have been around for a long time, but I just never used them before - they've become my new obsession and I am discovering ways that they help enhance my vision!*

#### Above: **Bolts**

Captured with the Nikon D2x and the 50mm Prime set to f/1.8 at 1/160th of a second. Processed in Lightroom and NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 1.

#### Far Right: **Guy GT**

This is a 3-stop, bracketed exposure using the Nikon D5100 and the Sigma 10-20mm. Processed in Lightroom and merged NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 2.



# 6

# GEAR ENVY

It's a common misconception that the better your camera is, the better your images will be . . . On more than one occasion, while out shooting in a public venue and interacting with others around me, someone will gawk at my camera - usually my Nikon D2x - which is a substantial piece of equipment, I get that - but without fail, someone will say something incredibly offending to me as an image maker. It usually goes something along the lines of . . .

"Sweet camera, dude . . . it must take great pictures." Or on the other side of that, while hosting a show or attending a gallery opening, someone will say "your pictures are amazing - you must have a good camera."

That's where I usually just smile, nod quietly . . . all the while gritting my teeth down to nubs and daggers threatening to launch forth from my gaze.

Camera companies will have you believe in a magic bullet - or in this case, a magic lens, camera body or newest gizmo that will have you shooting and making better images in no time flat.

Certainly, new cameras are packed with some amazingly advanced technology - bigger sensors, better low light shooting conditions (ISO) and longer battery life. But does having a new and innovative camera turn you into a better image maker?

**No - it does not.**

There are certain jobs I'll take on that require the bigger cameras. Commercial jobs or jobs that require me to shoot different techniques like longer exposures or High Dynamic Range photography. Plus - clients feel a certain satisfaction with your work when they see you shooting with a big camera. It's the nature of the beast.

But then there are the some days where I am out and about carrying only a point and shoot camera . . . or my even just my iPhone.

The image on the preceding page was shot while on a weekend vacation to Atlantic City. I left the big cameras in the hotel room and opted to carry my little Nikon P7000 point and shoot. I saw this amazing scene and shot it - the best camera you have is the one you have with you, right? I choose the P7000 because of the control I have over different settings. It does a decent enough job of emulating my big DSLR and I've sold several prints of this shot. It never fails to amaze buyers when I disclose that it was, in fact, captured with a small, point and shoot camera.

Another platform that I find myself using more and more is my iPhone - in fact, I've written a book called Cellular Images (available for free here). I absolutely love shooting and processing shots with my iPhone and or iPad. It's very freeing, artistically speaking, to throw off all the technical details of photography and simply enjoy the art of making an impactful image.

So how is this a step to improving your photography? I truly believe that in throwing off the preconceived notion of needing a 'good camera' to take good pictures is the key to get you thinking more about image making than capturing a 'technically correct' photograph. There are days were I'll limit myself in my gear . . . walk the streets of NYC with a point and shoot and you'll be amazed by what you capture.

You'll soon be a better shooter when you start focusing more on your images, than what your gear can do for you in terms of taking a photograph.



*There are those shooters out there who believe that you're not a 'true' photographer unless you're using some expensive, top-of-the-line equipment to make your photographs. I call them Gear Snobs. There's nothing you are doing to do to change their minds on this, so don't even try. Simply smile, take your pictures and enjoy the process. Leave the snobbery to those who believe they need it.*

Above: **Skyfall**

Shot with the iPhone 4's default camera app and processed on the iPad 3 in both Snapseed and LensLight.

Far Right: **Atlantic City**

Shot with the Nikon CoolPix P7000 at f5.6 and 1/500th of a second. Processed in Adobe Lightroom and Nik Software's HDR Efex Pro 1.



# 5

# THE TOOLS

There are two heroes I had growing up as a kid - James Bond and MacGyver. Being a photographer allows me to feel a little bit like those two men of action. Oh, the sweet gadgets I have at my disposal . . . from being able to trigger the camera from my iPhone to firing off multiple flash heads, each set to a their own individual radio frequency . . . well it's just amazing. Places like Best Buy and B&H Photo & Video serve as my very own Q-Branch.

On the flip side of that coin, being a photographer also calls upon my ability to improvise during a shoot - redirecting exceedingly bring light coming from a window by hanging a white bed sheet - we'll say borrowed - from my hotel room over said window in order to diffuse the volume of light. Or constructing a seamless background in my home studio - if B&H Photo and Video is my favorite camera shop, Home Depot or Lowes is my second favorite place to shop for items that help me achieve my vision.

I do carry around some essential gear that helps me in my picture taking . . . especially when shooting stuff like fireworks or lightning. Here's a breakdown of what you might find in my bag of tricks . . .

A tripod is an absolute must - and this is something you don't want to cheap out on. Save your pennies and get a good one. Your tripod body should be substantial enough to hold up your biggest lens and resist wind, weather and even your own clumsiness. As for the head on the tripod, I'd go for a simple ballhead with a single crank. Nothing dulls creativity more than dealing with too many knobs and handles.

Next up, grab a cable release suited to your camera brand. These are sold both wired and IR - or wireless - variety. They do range in price and quality; so again, don't immediately go for the most economical. Sadly, in photography, you often get what you pay for. The cable release will allow you to trigger your camera without having to touch the camera body - reducing vibrations that will cause a softer image.

I've also just recently begun shooting with Neutral Density filters. These stackable glass filters screw right onto the front of my lens and allow me to achieve very slow shutter speeds in broad daylight. So if I am shooting a waterfall, and I want to have a shot with the water smooth as silk, rather than freezing the motion, these allow me to do just that. Wonderful little things that I am currently having a blast using!

These are all store bought items - what about the MacGyver-ized stuff?

On the inside of each of my lens caps, you'll find a square piece of grey cardboard. This little bit of ingenuity helps me out in my post processing. The color grey is a specific tone - 18% grey to be exact. This allows me to know what colors are supposed to look like once I've downloaded my images and begin processing. At the beginning of a shoot, I'll place the lens cap in the shot - or have a model hold it close to her face and take a shot - then proceed with the rest of the shoot. Now - when I color correct for white balance in Adobe Lightroom, I only have to adjust the one picture with the 18% grey card in place, and then apply that same adjustment to the rest of the images - anything that gets me out from behind the computer and back out shooting the fastest!

Not everyone is going to need all the things I do . . . but with some careful attention to your own shooting and workflow habits, you'll figure out exactly what you'll need and when you'll need them!



*As you'll note below, the technique for shooting fireworks and lightning are very similar. A cable release allows me to stand away from my camera gear and evaluate the scene - whether shooting fireworks or lightning. You have to be fluid in your image making and be ready to move at moment's notice. A good tripod is also a must as your shutter will be open for long periods of time.*

#### Above: **Fireworks**

Captured with the D2x set to BULB, allowing for timed exposures. Shot with the 18-55 at f/8 with an ISO of 100. Processed in Adobe Lightroom.

#### Far Right: **Lightning**

Captured with the D2x set to BULB, allowing for timed exposures. Shot with the 18-55 at f/8 with an ISO of 100. Processed in Adobe Lightroom.



# 4

# ILLUMINATION

Here's another little known secret about photographers that I thought I'd share - we are a notoriously cranky bunch as we don't have the luxury of getting a whole lot of sleep. Why, you ask? Because we are always out chasing the best available light; and - may our 8-hour sleep cycles be damned - the best available light usually occurs before the sun comes up.

We are very prone to missing a lot of evening meals, too. That's usually when the sun is going down, which also offers up an elegant display of light. There's also that hour just prior to the sun dipping below the horizon that is dubbed the Magic Hour. You get these beautifully long shadows and wonderful color in the sky. But don't you dare leave after the sun has set - that's when you have what I call the Indigo Hour, where the sky is that really deep rich shade of blue and, if you're very fortunate, the stars begin their twinkling.

Some artists choose to work with paint, charcoal, clay or any number of other media. As photographers, the medium we've chosen is light and we're in a never ending battle to capture the very best light we can. Some of us specialize in natural light - others master the artificial variety. Regardless, without light, there would be nothing for us to capture.

Those of us who concentrate on available lighting utilize a number of filters and/or modifiers to help us control and shape the light. Likewise, artificial light shooters employ any number of reflectors, diffusers and blockers to achieve the look they are striving for.

Luck does play a factor in available lighting - but don't depend too heavily on it. Research will serve you well when looking to nail the perfect lighting condition. The shot of Big Ben you see on the next page was the result of some quick, on-line research to find out when the sun might sneak behind the clock tower. Then it was just a matter of stopping down my lens to f/32 to achieve that really nifty starburst along the side of the tower. That all happened in camera - no photoshopping on that one!

If you're inclined to use artificial light, the first thing you're going to want to do is get that flash off your camera. Nothing screams mediocre more than a photograph with straight on flash.

Cameras equipped with these little pop-up flashes are holding a little secret of their own. A lot of times, those little flashes can be used to remotely fire off the bigger, off-camera flashes. And if you can get your lighting right, you can shed what looks like some wonderfully natural lighting on your subject.

Light can also be experimented with and used more like a brush than you realize. Try illuminating a still-life with a small LED flashlight. This can be the most creative fun you'll have - trust me on this. Do an Internet search for "light painting" and you'll see what I am talking about. Some really neat effects can be achieved with some set-up and a little imagination!

Re-examine what time you are taking your pictures . . . especially if you're specializing in landscape or architecture photography - getting up before the sun does have its advantages - heck, you can even justify an afternoon siesta if you like! If you're an artificial shooter, explore the benefits of off-camera flash. Both of these will produce much stronger, more pleasing images.



*Light is the medium we as photographers use to create our art. The trick is finding just the right time to take your pictures.*

*Try and avoid direct sunlight, unless, of course, you're going for a particular look.*

*There are ideal times of day to shoot, but never limit yourself to those times.*

*Explore, experiment and endeavor to capture the best light you can.*

#### Above: **Paterson Falls**

Shot with the Nikon D5100 with a 18-55mm at f/11 and 1/13th of a second with an ISO of 100.

Processed in Lightroom and NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 2.0.

#### Far Right: **3:40pm in London**

Shot with the Nikon D5100 with the Sigma 10-20mm at f/32 at 1/125th of a second with an ISO of 100.

Processed in NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 2.0.



# 3

# PRINTMAKING

There is a statistic floating around the internet that makes the bold claim that today's photographers are only printing about three percent of all their images - and coming from the internet means it must be true, right?

Well, I am not sure of the validity of that statistic, but we sure aren't printing as much as we used to and that's a shame, because printing your image is a wonderful tool in enhancing your work as an image maker.

First, let me tell you that there is nothing - **nothing** - more rewarding to me as a photographer than getting a package from the photo lab I use, full of new prints for me to proof.

Viewing these same images on my computer screen is fine - the fact that I even get to carry around my entire body of work everywhere I go on my iPad is nothing short of miraculous - and they do look really good, too. But there's just something about being able to hold a hard copy print in your hand to make you feel like you've accomplished your goal as an image maker.

Seeing your work in print will also make you much more critical of your work . . . it's that finality that gives you an editorial eye. You'll be looking at focal points. You'll run your eyes around the edge of the print, looking for distracting elements.

The first time you see your work printed large - well, that's a whole other ballgame. The image you see on this page is of para-celebrity, David Allen Brown. It's an image he uses for posters at the events in which he appearances - huge 24x36 posters! I LOVE seeing my work reproduced at that size.

Now it's time for me to admit something - I don't do my own printing. It's shameful, I know . . . but there are two reasons why - the first of which is my main concern. Longevity.

I am talking about lab produced printing over ink-jet printing, of course. While there are some amazing printers out in the market, I hesitate to make that commitment simply because I know that my images are being lab processed on genuine Kodak paper and are **archival quality** - a key factor in my image making. One particular paper style I use resists fading for nearly 200 years. I am not sure there is an ink-jet printer in the world that can make that claim.

Another factor - to be frank - is cost. Lab processed prints are simply more economical to produce. I am able to pass on those savings to those who purchase my work. Most important to me and my image making is that someone, somewhere is showcasing my work - at home - in an office . . . anywhere that my vision might be enjoyed by others.

I utilize two different labs. Mpix is my first choice - exceptional quality and stellar customer service. AdoramaPix is also a fine lab with products matching Mpix. When I am pulling together a print order, I'll consult each lab on-line to see which one is having the better sale on the sizes I am looking for.

And then there's going beyond the print - when you start transferring your working onto canvas wraps, or beautifully finished wood - how about printing right on glass and illuminating it from behind?

I will warn you upfront - printing your stuff is addictive. And you'll run out of wall space soon enough. I collect many prints in binders - shelves full of them. Your turn!!



*The Lakota Wolf image on the proceeding page is one of my best selling images. It hangs in numerous collections and cherished by many, including one of my daughter's friends from elementary school. Her wonderful parents presented the image to her on a canvas wrap as a birthday present. I treasure the knowledge that she was beyond thrilled with the gift and it hangs in her room for her to enjoy.*

Above: **David Allen Brown**

Shot with the Nikon D5100 with a Sigma 10-20mm at f/5.6 at 1/60th of a second with an ISO of 100. A Nikon SB-900 Flash was fired from off camera. Processed in Lightroom and NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 2.0.

Far Right: **Lakota Wolf**

Shot with the Nikon D2x with 70-200mm at f/2.8 at 1/200th of a second with an ISO of 100. Processed in Adobe Lightroom.



# 2

# EXHIBITION

In this age of the Internet and social media, there's simply no better time to be a creative professional than now. There's an artistic renaissance taking place as we've never been able to reach out and connect with so many with so very little effort. Gone are the days of your work going unnoticed, locked away in a small corner of your studio waiting to be discovered. Representation is just a click away and that is now all left up to you!

Facebook is part of my business model. It has integrated itself into my workflow and become an essential part of my marketing efforts. Does it have drawbacks? Yes - of course. For every evangelist of Facebook - and social media as a whole - there are twice as many detractors. But I approach Facebook in this way - I don't put anything out there that I wouldn't do in the real world. It's that simple.

Many professionals create a Facebook Group for their photographic efforts. I haven't done that. My Facebook page is utilized for both my personal and professional updates. This sort of transparency has really worked well for me as my family and close friends get to see, and support, my professional work - and fans of my professional work get a peek at the person behind their favorite images.

Facebook isn't the only game out there - not by a long shot.

One of my favorite places to post images is 500px.com. This is a wonderful community of image makers that offer up comments and critiques of your images. There's a rating system and challenges given. It's free to sign up, but there are tiered memberships to purchase if you want to sell your work on the site.

Another fine place to showcase your images is JPGmag.com. Offering some of the same benefits of 500px.com, the extra special bonus from JPGmag.com is that if your image rates high enough and the editors deem it worthy, it could see print in the full color publication they put out. Publish or perish, as they say!

Putting your work out there does open up a lot of scary doors. Let me address some of them here . . .

Theft - every artist's worst nightmare. The Lakota Wolf image on page 19 was stolen and put into a viral email called "World's Best Wildlife Photos." How many viewers that email had is uncertain, but the image went unaccredited and sustained a really bad crop.

Criticism - people love to hate. It's going to happen. You're not going to please everyone so be prepared to defend your work. One exercise I've found is defining your image. Pick out a single word that helps you define your image. Then expand that to a whole sentence . . . and finally an entire paragraph. Your best argument with a critique is an intelligent discussion, not a flame war that has no winner.

The virtual world isn't the only place to display your work. Be sure to hook up with your local Arts Council and find out when and where they have gallery shows. Don't be afraid to set up at a small art and craft show at your community center. These places are stepping stones - heck, I still do them myself. One of my most successful shows when I first started out was a community garage sale. I still talk about that show - and still have buyers coming back for more from that one simple show!

Finally, don't be afraid to show off your work - it's why we create, so others can enjoy our vision.



*I love the gritty and grungy . . . it's a matter of person taste and I am 100% OK with the people that simply don't like it. There are quite a few people out there who also don't like my HDR treatment I do to some of my photographers. I am totally fine with that, too. Art and photography is subjective and there's simply no way you're going to please everyone, every time.*

#### Above: **Boonton Caboos**

This is a 5-stop, bracketed exposure using the Nikon D2x and the Sigma 10-20mm. Processed in Lightroom and merged NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 2.

#### Far Right: **Red Columns**

This is a 7-stop, bracketed exposure using the Nikon D2x and the Sigma 10-20mm. Processed in Lightroom and merged NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 2.



# 1

# PHOTOGRAPH

And finally - the very last step. First, I want to thank you guys for hanging in there with me this far! I've had a wonderfully unconventional career as a photographer and I hope you find the tips and tricks I've learned along the way useful in your own image making endeavors. I've taken the approach with this book that you and I are on a shoot together - just talking photography and enjoying the craft.

So here, at last, is my final step to getting better images . . . It is the uber-double secret step that every professional photographer does, but doesn't want you to know about . . . and I am about to spill the beans . . .

Ok, so the secret to getting that one really good shot - here it is - ready to write this down?

The secret is to take LOTS of pictures.

Seriously - that's it.

In the wonderful age of digital photography, where it doesn't cost us anything at all to take shots over and over again, why not hedge your bets and take multiple shots of your subject to help you achieve your vision?

For every one of my images that I might consider print worthy, there must be a dozen or more shots involved. I am not ashamed to admit that - nor should you be. The key is that my viewing public only gets to see the shot that I've picked - they don't see my mistakes. Heck, even the snap shots I post to Facebook and other assorted social media get a once over with either my iPad or full on processed in Adobe Lightroom.

Now that's not to say luck doesn't play a factor - I wouldn't be where I am today with an uncanny and abundant degree of luck. But it's not something I heavily rely on.

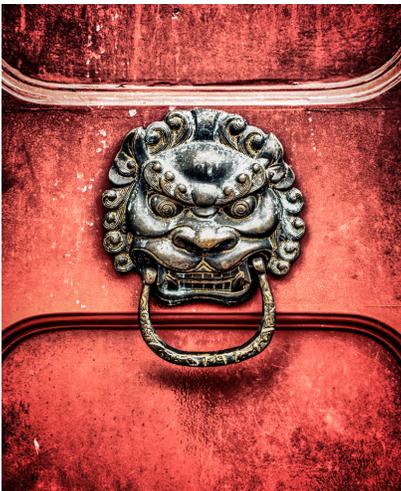
Take the shot of my daughter at ballet practice on the following page. I must have shot 60 images in that half hour dance lesson. A quick glance in my direction spurred on this wonderful grin that isn't in any of the 59 other images. Are those images no good? Some of them, sure . . . blurry or too soft. And some of them are perfectly fine images, but it's that grin that makes this shot. So that's a ratio of 60:1.

Utilize the tools you have available to you to make sure you're getting the shot you see in your head. Many times in the field, I'll tether my camera up to my iPad so I can see a much larger preview of my composition.

I'll shoot a subject from different positions, different angles and lighting. I'll bracket my exposures or grab the camera off the tripod and go in nice and close. Like I said, hedging my bets - anything I can do to achieve my vision.

The selection process is - at the same time - both easy and frustrating. Many times a single shot will jump right out and I know I've made my image. Other times, the composition takes a bit of finessing to take shape. It's part of the process - the journey from pre-visualization to finished, printed piece.

So those are my secrets . . . not really so secretive, right - but they've served me well over a wonderful career and I sincerely hope that they've inspired you to revisit your creative side and begin looking at your photography in a whole new way.



*Having a child means I have the perfect subject to photograph at all times. My image library consists of a few hundred, thousand shots . . . a very large portion of those are of my very own Peyton Marie. She's on the cover to my very first professional gig, The Konxari Cards, and I try to incorporate her into any project I am working on . . . she's a treasure, that kid of mine and I can't wait to see what the future brings in our adventures together!*

Above: **Chinese Door Knocker**

Shot with the Nikon D5100 with 18-55mm at f/8 at 1/60th of a second with an ISO of 400. Processed in Adobe Lightroom and NIK Software's HDR Efex Pro 2.0.

Far Right: **Sneaky Smile**

Shot with the Nikon D5100 with 18-55mm at f/4 at 1/250th of a second with an ISO of 2000. Processed in Adobe Lightroom.



# RECOMMENDED

I am a compulsive reader. I've always got 2-4 books going on at the same time - most are of the paper variety, though - despite my best intent - many are increasingly of the digital variety, like the one you are currently reading. At any given time, I'll be reading a work of fiction, the manual to the newest member of my camera family, a book on photography and one or two comic books or graphic novels. As I mentioned earlier, I get a TON of inspiration out of my reading . . . and I hope to pass along some titles that may inspire you!

The books on the proceeding page are what I consider the best of the best. The top row includes four volumes in the Digital Photography series by Scott Kelby. These books are perfect for the beginner, but also refreshing for the seasoned professional as readers get a look at the workflow of Kelby, arguably one of the best how-to authors out there when it comes to photography. They are chock full of hints, tips and techniques and enough settings to get your portfolio up to speed sooner than later.

The second row are my personal favorites - whereas Kelby's books are the ultimate How-To, David duChimen's series are all about the 'WHY.' Why do we photograph the things we do? What draws us to certain subjects? How can we best represent our vision? Really great stuff and books I've read more than once. David is a humanitarian photographer, an amazing instructor and a gifted writer. I have these right next to my desk so I can peruse them at any given time.

Joe McNally's books - in the third row - are simply must reads. I've had the pleasure and privilege of training with Joe on more than one occasion and he is the most talented, yet most humble, photographer you will ever meet. He's done it all - from celebrity portraits, to sports start, to work with National Geographic and Life Magazine. His stories are the stuff of legend and told in only the way Joe can tell it. He'll be the first to tell you some of the funniest, most embarrassing fumbles he's made during his long career so you'll do your best to avoid those same mistakes. I actually own two editions of *The Moment it Clicks* - one is so dogeared and highlighted, the binding is coming loose. The second is near pristine and inscribed "To Paul - Keep Shooting!" It's one of my prized possessions.

The two Oz books are from another amazing humanitarian photographer, Vincent Versace. It's because of Versace that I had the good fortune of working with the NIK Software Beta team on their entire suite of photo editing software. This isn't stuff for the light hearted - Vinny is a tech savvy post-processor who freely gives us the secrets to his amazing workflow. His passion for creating the most powerful image imaginable is apparent in his writing. Highly recommended.

*Visual Poetry*, by Chris Orwig is a wonderful read. Unlike the Oz books, this is again, more about the WHY in shooting rather than the HOW. Chris connects with his subjects like no one else. He exposes their vulnerable side and creates portraits that are at once, engaging - telling a wonderful story without the use of words. The book is also packed full of interviews with other inspiring photographers like John Paul Caponigro and Steve McCurry. Chris has a follow up to this book, *People Pictures: 30 Exercises for Creating Authentic Photographs*. Be sure to check out both!

Finally, Stephen Johnson's *On Digital Photography* should be on every digital photographer's books shelf. It is - to me - THE book on the field of digital photography. In fact, it's one of the first books on the field I ever read. It's got some dated material in it, but still worth its weight in gold as far as I am concerned.

Each book cover on the proceeding page is an active link to an Amazon.com page.



*The amount of resources on the internet for learning the art of photography is staggering. Some links I visit on a regular basis include:*

*The Strobist*

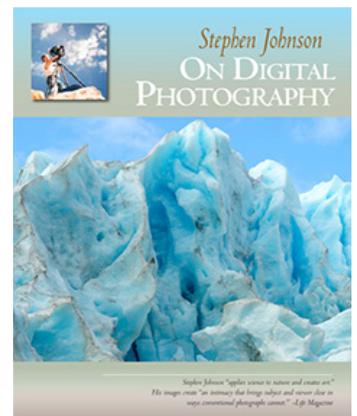
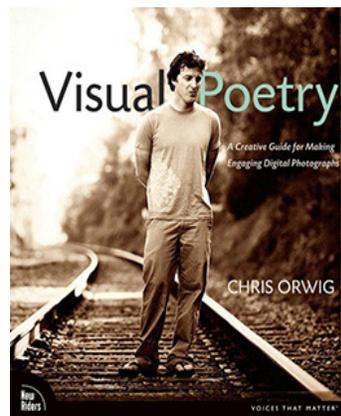
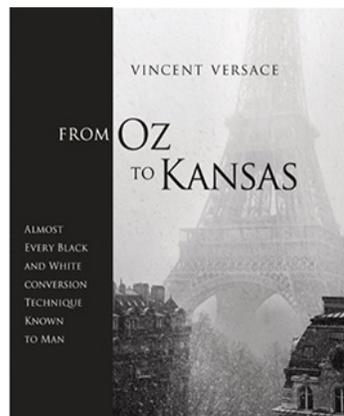
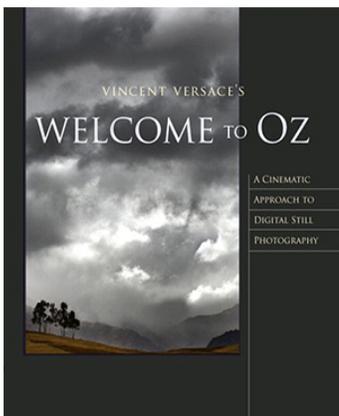
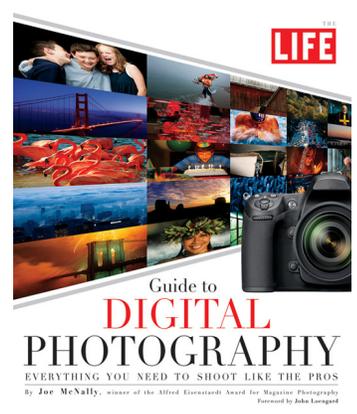
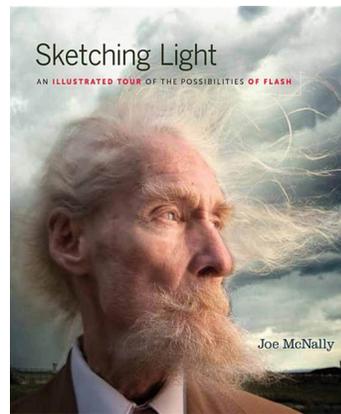
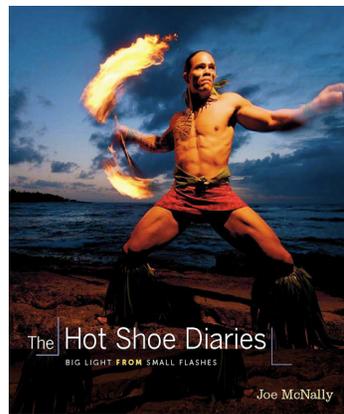
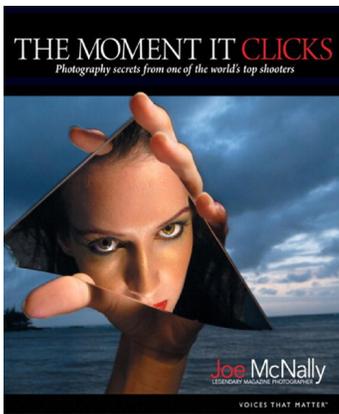
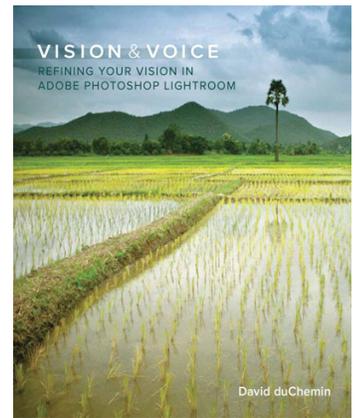
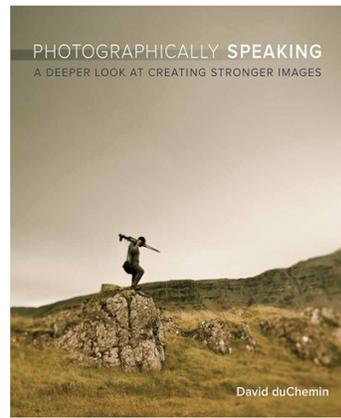
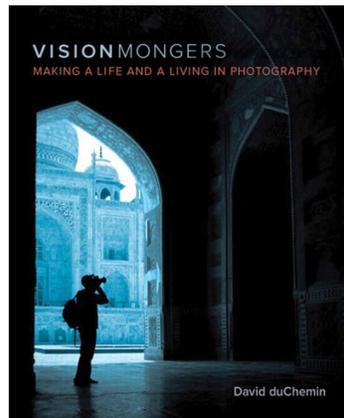
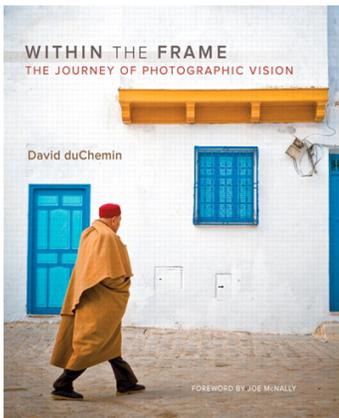
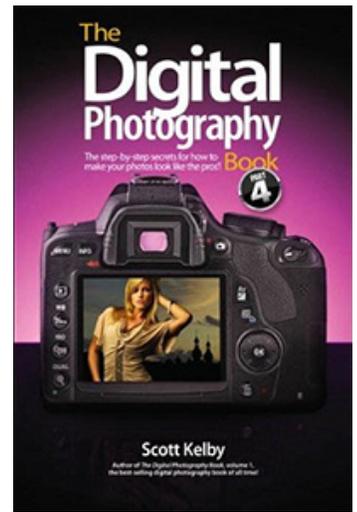
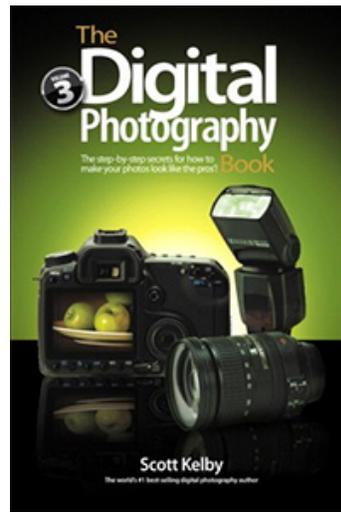
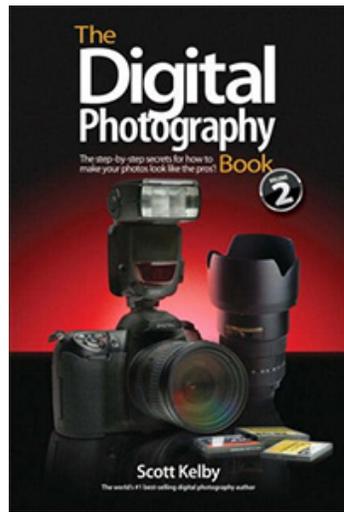
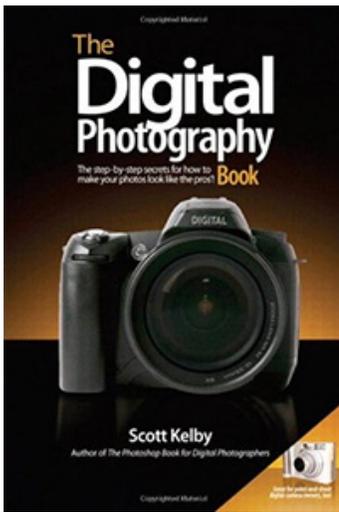
*John Paul Caponigro Illuminating Creativity*

*Lightroom Killer Tips*

*Stuck in Customs*

Above: **Pages**

Shot with the Nikon D2x with the 70-200mm at f/8 for 4/10th of a second at an ISO of 800. Processed in Lightroom. The book pictured is photographer Chase Jarvis' *Stevens Pass*. Another autographed treasure in my library.



# BIOGRAPHY

Paul Michael Kane combines his extensive background in visual communication with traditional and alternative photographic processes utilizing the latest advances in digital media. Exhibited internationally, his works have been purchased for numerous private and public collections. He's won several "best-in-show" awards and continues to explore new technologies as the field of digital photography expands.

Published widely as a photographer, designer and a writer, Kane's award winning photographic work has received 5-star ratings by *Popular Photography's* blog site.

He was the sole contributing photographer for the highly acclaimed Konxari Cards, a popular paranormal card supplement. The 88-card deck will see some television air time in 2013. The cards were given a great review by the renown *Rue Morgue Magazine* and will be showcased in a Canadian television production called *The Other Side*.

In April 2009, Kane released his first book of photography entitled *Captured: The Ruins of Eastern State Penitentiary*. Kane not only contributed the images, but also designed the book and recorded an audio commentary to go along with the images.

Kane's work is also featured in the July 2009 collaborative project, *The White Album*. The book, a visual tribute to The Beatles, showcases artwork inspired by songs and lyrics from the Fab Four. Kane's contributions are the only photographic work featured in the book – among traditional artistic media. The book debuted to great success at ComicCon International, the biggest multimedia event of the year.

Late 2009 saw the release of Kane's first 'folio' collection called *Fort Mifflin: The Fort that Saved America*.

In 2010, *The Lakota Wolves* folio came out and features - for the first time - Kane's wildlife work. Kane photographed more than 2 dozen wolves for the book.

Early 2011, Kane was asked to photograph the *1799 Lazaretto*, a vital historic location just north of the Philadelphia International Airport.

In summer of 2011, the Special Vehicles Team Owners Association published *Ford GT: The Complete Owners Experience*. The book featured a wrap-around cover by Kane and over 50 interior images shot specifically for the book. Sold out of its first printing, the book is now in its second edition. The *Tonight Show's* host, Jay Leno, can be seen interviewing the book's authors on his automotive podcast from Pebble Beach.

Kane is often quoted as saying that 'the best camera you have is the one you have with you.' With that in mind, Kane published *Cellular Images* in 2012 - a free e-book showcasing some of his iPhone photography. This interactive book has been downloaded nearly 12,000 times and allows readers to click on apps mentioned in the copy of the book.

Additionally, his design work has graced the covers of several popular novels as well as a 30th anniversary *Star Wars* Poster. Kane's writing has appeared in such publications as *Art Scene International* and *The International Writers Open Forum*.

Kane draws his inspiration from multiple sources, from past mentors to new and upcoming talent. He has a tremendous web presence, taking advantage of many social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter

Well respected as a proficient graphic designer and photographer, Kane has given lectures on both visual communication and fine art photography across the United States.

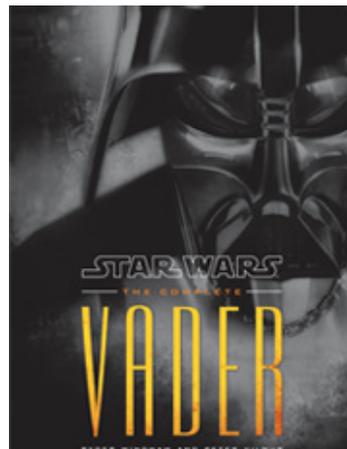
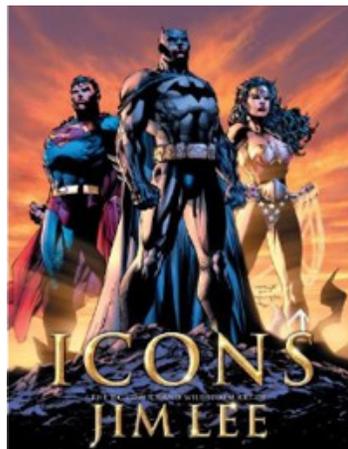
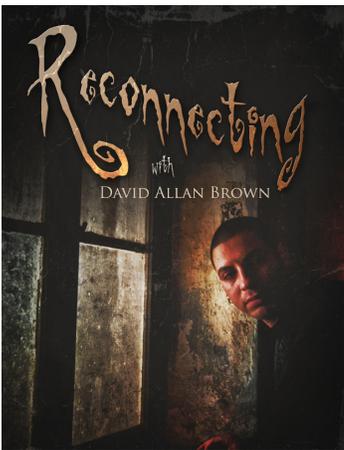
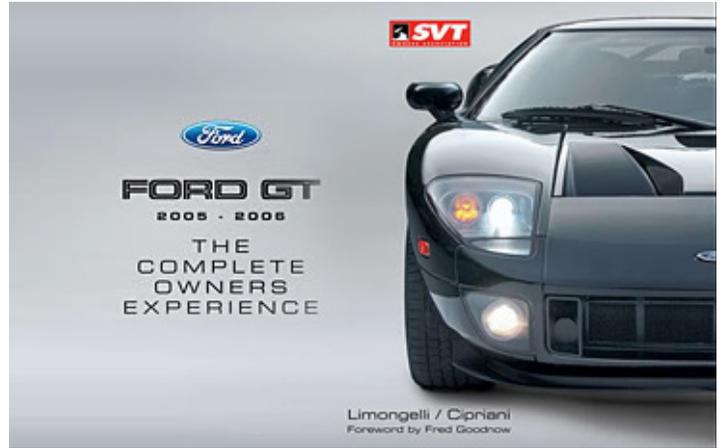
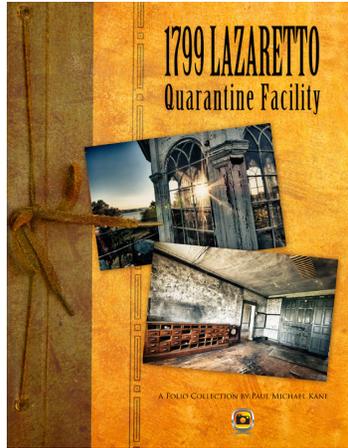
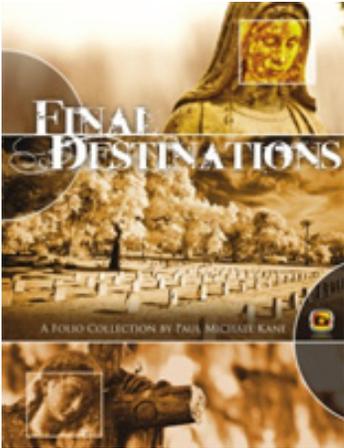
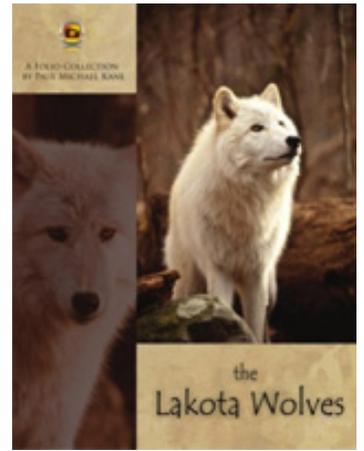
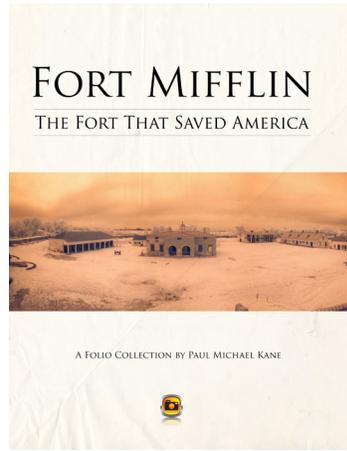
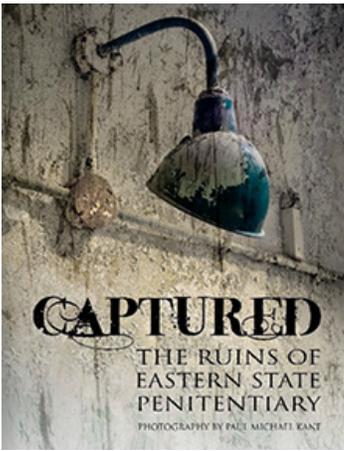
He is the very proud father of Peyton Marie, and blessed husband of over 12 years to his wife Heather Lyn. The happy family resides in the beautiful, and very photogenic, mountains of Northern New Jersey.



Despite all the wonderful projects and publications I've had the pleasure of working on, I never fail to be moved by seeing my work on the printed page. Projects like the Konxari Cards or the Ford GT book make it possible for me to undertake smaller, more personal projects, like the Fort Mifflin book or the 1799 Lazaretto book.

## Above: **Self Portrait**

Shot with the Nikon D2x with the 50mm prime at f/1.8 for 125th of a second at an ISO of 200. Processed in Lightroom and finished in NIK's HDR Efex Pro II. The rare times you'll find me in front of the camera is when I am behind it as well.



# Got Wall Space?



Prints in custom sizes available at  
[www.paulmichaelkane.com](http://www.paulmichaelkane.com)