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Course Guidebook

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC™

Learn Photography from 12 National Geographic Masters

William Albert Allard, Stephen Alvarez, Ira Block, Jodi Cobb, Annie Griffiths, Ed Kashi, Michael Melford, Cory Richards, Jim Richardson, Joel Sartore, Steve Winter, and Michael Yamashita

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Corporate Headquarters
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Phone: 1-800-832-2412
Fax: 703-378-3819
www.thegreatcourses.com

National Geographic Photographers

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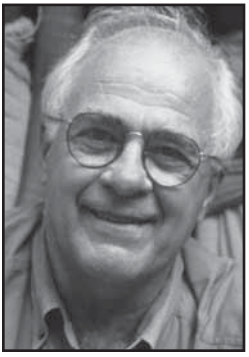
William Albert Allard

A major force at National Geographic and in mainstream photography for 50 years, William Albert Allard has contributed to the Society's magazine stories and books as a photographer and writer since 1964. He studied at the Minneapolis School of Fine Arts (now the Minneapolis College of Art and Design) and the University of Minnesota. Mr. Allard is the author of six highly acclaimed books, including the award-winning *Vanishing Breed: Photographs of the Cowboy and the West*. His latest book, *William Albert Allard: Five Decades*, a retrospective and memoir, explores his long career in both words and pictures. Among his worldwide exhibitions, his one-man show at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in 2002 was the first exhibit of work by an American artist in Iran since 1979. Considered one of color photography's most celebrated pioneers, Mr. Allard is a former contributor to Magnum Photos, and his prints appear in private and museum collections. Learn more about his work online at http://www.williamalbertallard.com/. ■



Stephen Alvarez

Photographer and filmmaker Stephen Alvarez produces global stories about exploration, adventure, and culture. He has been a *National Geographic* magazine photographer since 1995 and has published more than a dozen stories with the magazine. Mr. Alvarez has won awards from Pictures of the Year International and *Communication Arts*. His story on the Maya and their religious rituals was exhibited at Visa pour L'Image, a renowned international photojournalism

festival in Perpignan, France. Mr. Alvarez also has produced stories with NPR, including a story on underground Paris that won a 2012 White House News Photographers Association award. He has appeared on NPR, PBS, and *CBS News Sunday Morning* and at the Annenberg Space for Photography, the Shakerag Workshops, *National Geographic Live*, the Atlanta Photojournalism Seminar, and the Banff Centre. Mr. Alvarez is a founding member of, and social media strategist for, The Photo Society, a group of contributing photographers for *National Geographic* magazine. His work is on the web at http://alvarezphotography.com/. ■

Ira Block

Ira Block is an internationally acclaimed photojournalist, filmmaker, teacher, and workshop leader who has produced more than 30 stories for *National Geographic*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and *National Geographic Adventure* magazines. He began his career as a newspaper photographer, earning numerous press club awards. His momentous coffee-table book, *Saving America's Treasures*, was a collaborative effort among the Clinton White House, the National Geographic Society, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Mr. Block's photographic exhibit *Faces of Hope*, portraits of survivors and images of objects retrieved from the aftermath of the World Trade Center tragedy, is part of the permanent collection of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum. As an expert in lighting, Mr. Block is sought after for assignments ranging from shooting ancient artifacts in Greece to photographing dinosaur fossils in the Gobi Desert and documenting Moche mummies in Peru. View more of Mr. Block's work at http://www.irablock.com/. ■

Jodi Cobb

Jodi Cobb's groundbreaking career spans more than three decades as a staff photographer with *National Geographic*, one of only four women to have held that position in the magazine's history. She has worked in more than 65 countries, documenting closed societies and disappearing cultural

traditions. Ms. Cobb is perhaps best known as the first photographer to document the secret lives and rituals of the geisha, revealed in her book *Geisha: The Life, the Voices, the Art*. The book was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and won the American Society of Media Photographers Outstanding Achievement Award. In another first, Ms. Cobb provided an unflinching look at the brutal reality of human trafficking in the *National Geographic* story "21st-Century Slaves." Featured as one of National Geographic's *Women of Vision* in a new book and exhibition, Ms. Cobb has repeatedly received National Press Photographers Association Pictures of the Year and World Press awards. In 2012, she was awarded one of journalism's most prestigious honors, the Missouri Honor Medal for Distinguished Service in Journalism. Learn more about Ms. Cobb at http://www.jodicobb.com/. ■

Annie Griffiths

Annie Griffiths has photographed in nearly 150 countries during her illustrious career and worked on dozens of magazine and book projects for National Geographic. Her books include *A Camera, Two Kids, and a Camel: My Journey in Photographs*, a memoir about balance and the joy of creating a meaningful life, and *National Geographic Simply Beautiful Photographs*, which was named the top photo/art book of 2011 by both Amazon and Barnes & Noble. In addition to her magazine work, Ms. Griffiths is the Executive Director of Ripple Effect Images, a collective of photographers who document programs that empower women and girls in the developing world, especially as they deal with the devastating effects of climate change. Known for her warmth and humor as a lecturer, Ms. Griffiths has the innate ability to share stories from her photographs that bring to life both the people and the cultures she documents. Learn more about her work at http://www.anniegriffiths.com/about/. ■

Ed Kashi

Ed Kashi is a photojournalist, a filmmaker, and an educator dedicated to documenting the social and political issues that define our times. Since 2000, he has pioneered the movement to multimedia and filmmaking in photojournalism, producing an innovative flip-book entitled *Iraqi Kurdistan* and award-winning short films and multimedia projects on geopolitics and social issues. Mr. Kashi has won numerous awards from World Press Photo and Pictures of the Year International, as well as the UNICEF Photo of the Year for 2010, a Prix Pictet commission in 2010, and honors from *Communication Arts* and *American Photo*. He has published seven books, including *Curse of the Black Gold: 50 Years of Oil in the Niger Delta* and *THREE*. His latest book, *Photojournalisms*, is a compilation of journal writings to his wife, done over a nearly 20-year period from various locations around the world. View more of Mr. Kashi's work at http://edkashi.com/blog/. ■

Michael Melford

Michael Melford is an internationally recognized photographer who has worked with National Geographic for more than 30 years. He has produced 19 feature stories for *National Geographic* magazine and more than 30 stories for *National Geographic Traveler*. His work also has been featured on the covers of *Newsweek*, *TIME*, *LIFE*, *Fortune*, *Smithsonian*, *GEO*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Travel Holiday*, and *Coastal Living.* Mr. Melford has won recognition from World Press Photo, the International Center of Photography, the Art Director's Club, and numerous other arts organizations and publications. He also has produced photography for eight National Geographic books, including *National Geographic Treasures of Alaska: The Last Great American Wilderness* and *Hidden Alaska: Bristol Bay and*

Beyond. Mr. Melford teaches photography primarily through National Geographic; he leads one-day seminars around the country through *National Geographic Traveler*'s photo seminar series and travels with National Geographic Expeditions aboard the small ship fleet and on other trips around the world. Learn more about his work at http://www.michaelmelford.com/. ■

Cory Richards

A climber and visual storyteller, Cory Richards was named National Geographic Adventurer of the Year in 2012, the same year the American Alpine Club presented him with its Rowell Award. At the 2014 National Geographic Explorers Symposium, Mr. Richards was named to the inaugural group of National Geographic Photography Fellows, whose work combines visual storytelling and exploration. Mr. Richards's camera has taken him from the runway to the wild and remote corners of the world, from Antarctica's unclimbed peaks to the Himalayas of Nepal and Pakistan, in an attempt to capture not only the soul of exploration but also the beauty of modern society. He is a passionate mountain climber on The North Face athletic team and has carved a niche as one of the world's leading adventure and expedition photographers. His photography has appeared in *National Geographic* magazine, *Outside*, and *The New York Times*. His film work has won awards at nearly every major adventure film festival, including grand prize at the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival for *Cold*. View more of Mr. Richards's work at http://www.coryrichards.com/. ■

Jim Richardson

Jim Richardson has been a photographer for National Geographic for more than 30 years, specializing in global environmental issues and landscapes. He also is interested in the Celtic world, with special attention to Scotland and its remote islands. His documentary photography has focused on the American Great Plains and includes extended coverage of small-town life in his native Kansas. He has a 30-year photographic

relationship with the people of Cuba, Kansas (population 220). This unusual body of work has been excerpted in *National Geographic*, *LIFE*, and many other publications worldwide. Among his books is *The Colorado: A River at Risk*, which has been recognized widely for its contribution to awareness of water issues in the American West. In addition to photographing for *National Geographic* magazine, Mr. Richardson represents National Geographic in keynote presentations, media appearances, cultural enrichment lectures for travel groups, and workshops. To view his portfolio, visit http://www.jimrichardsonphotography.com/. ■

Joel Sartore

Joel Sartore is a photographer and National Geographic Fellow, a speaker, a writer, a teacher, and a regular contributor to *National Geographic* magazine. His work has been recognized by the National Press Photographers Association and Pictures of the Year International. In addition to his work for *National Geographic*, Mr. Sartore has contributed to *Audubon* magazine, *TIME*, *LIFE*, *Newsweek*, *Sports Illustrated*, and numerous book projects. He also has published several books himself, including *RARE: Portraits of America's Endangered Species*; *Nebraska: Under a Big Red Sky*; and *Photographing Your Family: And All the Kids and Friends and Animals Who Wander through Too*. His most recent book is titled *Let's Be Reasonable.* Mr. Sartore and his work have been the subjects of several national broadcasts, including *National Geographic Explorer*, *NBC Nightly News*, NPR's *Weekend Edition*, and an hour-long PBS documentary titled *At Close Range with National Geographic*. He is also a regular contributor on the *CBS News Sunday Morning* show. His work is on the web at http://www.joelsartore.com/. ■

Steve Winter

Steve Winter has been a photojournalist with National Geographic for more than 20 years, specializing in wildlife, particularly big cats. He is also an adventurer who has been attacked by rhinos, stalked by jaguars, and charged by an 11-foot grizzly bear. Mr. Winter was named Wildlife Photographer of the Year in 2008 and Wildlife Photojournalist of the Year in 2012 in a competition cosponsored by the Natural History Museum in London and BBC Worldwide. He won the Pictures of the Year International Global Vision Award in 2010 and 2011 and received first prize in the nature category from World Press Photo in 2008 and 2014. Mr. Winter is the coauthor of *Tigers Forever: Saving the World's Most Endangered Big Cat*. He lectures globally on photography and conservation issues and has been featured on NPR, as well as the *CBS Evening News*, *60 Minutes*, and other programs. Mr. Winter teaches workshops with Wildlife Photo Masterclass, a cooperative formed by National Geographic photographers. He is on the web at http://www.stevewinterphoto.com/. ■

Michael Yamashita

Michael Yamashita is a 30-year award-winning veteran of National Geographic and has photographed a vast range of topics and locations, most notably in Asia. He has traipsed with camels across the Taklimakan Desert, scaled peaks in Tibet, and journeyed the length of the Great Wall. He has published more than 30 *National Geographic* magazine features, as well as 10 books. He also has two documentary films to his credit, *Marco Polo: The China Mystery Revealed* and *Treasure Fleet: The Adventures of Zheng He*. His most recent book, *Shangri-La: Along the Tea Road to Lhasa*, took him to the far reaches of western China and the Himalayas to capture the fast-disappearing ancient culture of Tibet. Mr. Yamashita has taught at major

photo workshops and art centers, including the Maine Media Workshops, Santa Fe Photographic Workshops, Tuscany Photo Workshop, and Palm Beach Photographic Centre. He also has conducted hands-on workshops in such far-flung locales as Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, and China. His work is online at http://www.michaelyamashita.com/. ■

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National Geographic Masters of Photography

Scope:

This course brings you the work of 12 National Geographic photographers divided into six units: Adventure, Wildlife, Landscape and Nature, People in Their Environments, Color and Light, and Storytelling. In each unit, you'll hear from two world-renowned photographers about their specialties and gain insight into the creative process behind some of their iconic photographs.

The first unit, Adventure, is taught by Cory Richards, an experienced mountain climber, and Stephen Alvarez, an adventurer who explores caves. In their lessons, you'll learn how to tell the story of an expedition, including the importance of setting the scene and showing the human side of the adventure. You'll also find tips on composition and lighting in the field and shooting in difficult spots that you can apply to your own adventures closer to home. The next unit is Wildlife, taught by Steve Winter and Joel Sartore. Both of these photographers are interested in photographing animals in order to save them and to encourage responsible stewardship of the natural world. Mr. Winter shares ideas for applying the techniques of wildlife photography to animals you might find in your own backyard, while Mr. Sartore suggests a number of interesting locations where you can interact with and photograph exotic species. In the third unit, Landscape and Nature, Jim Richardson and Michael Yamashita show you how to capture the unexpected in landscapes. Mr. Richardson emphasizes the importance of adding new skills to your photographic repertoire—even if it means experimenting with a flashlight in the middle of the night. Mr. Yamashita discusses the relationship of design in general to photography, highlighting the shared concerns of landscape designers and photographers: layering, color, light, and impact on the viewer.

The fourth unit, People in Their Environments, is taught by Jodi Cobb and Ira Block. From these photographers, you'll learn about gaining access to, and building relationships with your subjects. Ms. Cobb takes you inside stories she has shot in China when it first reopened to the West, on a tour of the secret world of the geisha, and into heartbreaking scenes of human

trafficking. Mr. Block shows you how to capture the environment and activities of people you're photographing and how to include the element of surprise in your images. In the fifth unit, Color and Light, you'll hear from Michael Melford and Annie Griffiths. Mr. Melford discusses the four types of light that photographers look for—diffuse light, side light, backlight, and magic light—while Ms. Griffiths focuses on the personalities of colors and suggests numerous experiments you can try with color. Finally, the Storytelling unit, taught by William Albert Allard and Ed Kashi, brings together all the lessons of the course to show how you can put together photo essays to document your travels, your neighborhood, or your daily life. Mr. Allard discusses the importance of conveying a sense of place and intimacy with your subjects in your photographs and provides tips on incorporating portraits into your stories and using available light. You'll also be challenged with a range of assignments to apply these secrets to your own photography. ■

Cory Richards—Adventure

Lessons 1–2

All adventure is created through the people who engage in it, and for this reason, an adventure encompasses much more than just the challenges those people take on. It includes the people who provide support, the local culture, the action itself, and the vulnerability and humanness of the adventurers. As photographers, we have to engage with all aspects of adventure. The more we can achieve that goal, the deeper and more relatable our stories will be.

Elements of Adventure Photography

Adventure is often about being outside and taking on physical challenges, but there's much more to it than that. It's about relatable human moments—those times when the people on an expedition are carrying their gear in a storm or taking shelter inside a tent. It's also about relationships—team members playing a board game or one team member learning from another. In adventure photography, you want to give viewers a sense of wonder and fear, but you also want to find elements that everyone can relate to. Try to give your viewers something to hold onto.

Discomfort is a significant part of any adventure. In fact, if it's not uncomfortable, it's probably not a very challenging adventure. But those times when you just want to curl up in the tent are exactly when you should take out your camera and start shooting; such moments of exhaustion and discomfort are very relatable experiences.

As an experiment, try taking portraits of the adventurers or their support team. Think about how you can replicate studio conditions in the field. Try to make those images tell part of the story without showing the adventure itself.

Look for a sense of immediacy in the scenes you photograph. Think of moments when there is a great deal of activity or the weather is fierce, and try to capture that urgency. How can you show what it feels like to confront a difficult or dangerous challenge?

Strange or unexpected scenes or discoveries are sometimes present in adventure photography. Such moments draw viewers into your photographs, grabbing their attention and prompting them to wonder what's going on in the image.

One way to think about telling the story of an adventure as a whole is to ask yourself a series of questions: First, how can you encapsulate the theme of your story in an opening image? How can you combine the story of the adventure itself with the local culture or other aspects of the surrounding environment you want to highlight? Then, how can you bring viewers in even closer? How can you capture a moment of discovery in an adventure story or bring viewers into the action? Next, what is the payoff to your story? What was the ultimate goal of the adventure? And finally, how can you close the story with something powerful? Can you give the viewer one last look at the beauty and majesty of the landscape? Answering these questions incorporates many of the basic skills and concepts of photography, such as creative use of composition and light.

Focusing on the Landscape

In addition to the human element, to tell the story of an adventure, you also need to show the landscape. After all, adventure photography is about incorporating the environment into the picture so that viewers start to understand what it feels like to be there. Try putting small people in large landscapes to give viewers a sense of awe, or experiment with isolating one person in the landscape to show hardship. You can also isolate a person by using color in a monochromatic landscape.

Sometimes, you can put people in a landscape by using silhouette. This can be an effective way to show how small and insignificant humans are. Silhouette also creates intimate moments—not with the human subjects but with the landscape itself. This technique focuses viewers' attention on the landscape, giving them a sense of awe and wonder.

View the landscape in terms of form. How can you use lines and color to create unexpected moments that are both engaging to the eye and move your story along? Look for landscapes that are either very simple or very complex.

Use large, open spaces—negative spaces—to isolate a single person and show how intimidating the experience of an adventure can be.

Composition and Lighting in the Field

Look for leading lines to help compose your frames. This can be a rope or even a ray of light. The idea here is to draw the viewer's eye to where you want it to be. Be aware of forms and the interplay between forms to add graphic impact to your images.

Use composition to tell stories that are not necessarily immediately apparent. In a story about climbing, show the equipment and the clothing of the climbers. Focus on textures in the landscape or the human environment. Show the gritty details of the expedition, such as a dirty, exhausted climber. These elements help tell the story of climbing without showing the action itself.

Try to use natural light as much as you can, rather than distracting viewers with overt added lighting. Look for unusual light sources, such as fires. You might also try experimenting with darkness in your images: Isolate a subject in light and keep most of the rest of the frame dark. This technique often gives a sense of vastness to an image.

Remember that with a truly great and honest moment, composition, sharpness, and other elements of good photography come second. Such moments will never happen again, and you have to try to anticipate them. That anticipation is a significant part of working in a dynamic, active environment. Always be aware of the light and the activity around you.

Observing without Being Present

As much as photography is about capturing the moment—just 1/500 of a second—it's also about the five days before the moment that you spend building relationships with your subjects. You want your subjects to feel comfortable enough with your presence to ignore both you and the camera. That level of comfort comes about only by taking the time to get to know the people you're photographing and by respecting their lifestyles and values.

In most cases, photographers need to be observers who are not present. Unless you're making a portrait, you don't want subjects to make eye contact with you. Remove yourself from the activity around you as much as you can.

Communicating Larger Issues

Photography is a powerful means of communicating information to help solve larger problems. For example, photographs can relate the story of a changing culture, such as the sea gypsy people—the Bajau of Indonesia—or publicize the dangerous effects of climate change on animal populations. Again, such stories call on multiple skills for photographers. How can you show wildlife in an impactful way—by isolating a single animal, showing large numbers of animals, or photographing an animal in a changing environment? How can you illustrate the effects of global warming on the landscape? What details can you use to reveal the human impact on an environment without necessarily showing humans? Finally, can you end with hope? Can you give viewers the sense that we have the capacity to solve these problems, even if we don't have all the answers right now? Adventure photography—or any kind of photography—is about bringing together all your tools and skills to create images with the power to move your viewers.

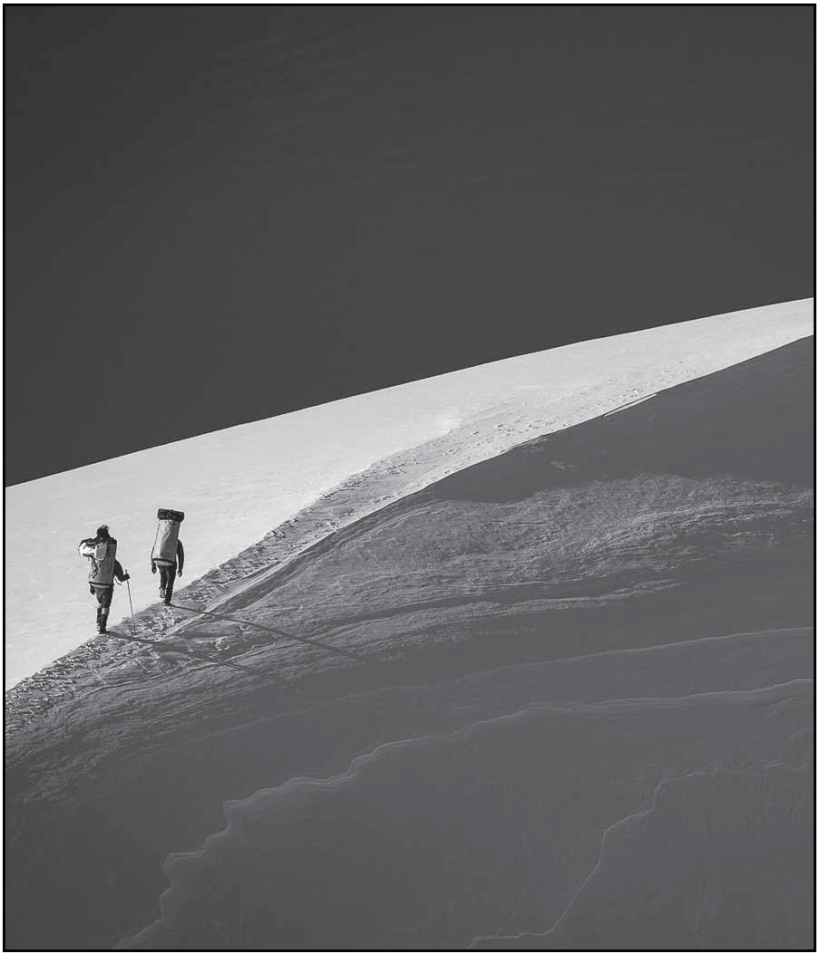
Assignment

1. Pick a skill set in photography that isn't your best or most solid, such as portraits, landscapes, or wildlife. Then, go out into the field and refine your skills. Push through your own boundaries to expand what you can do with photography.

Redefine Adventure

Lesson 1

All images in Lessons 1 and 2 © Cory Richards.



Hikers isolated in landscape, Antarctica.

Climbers.

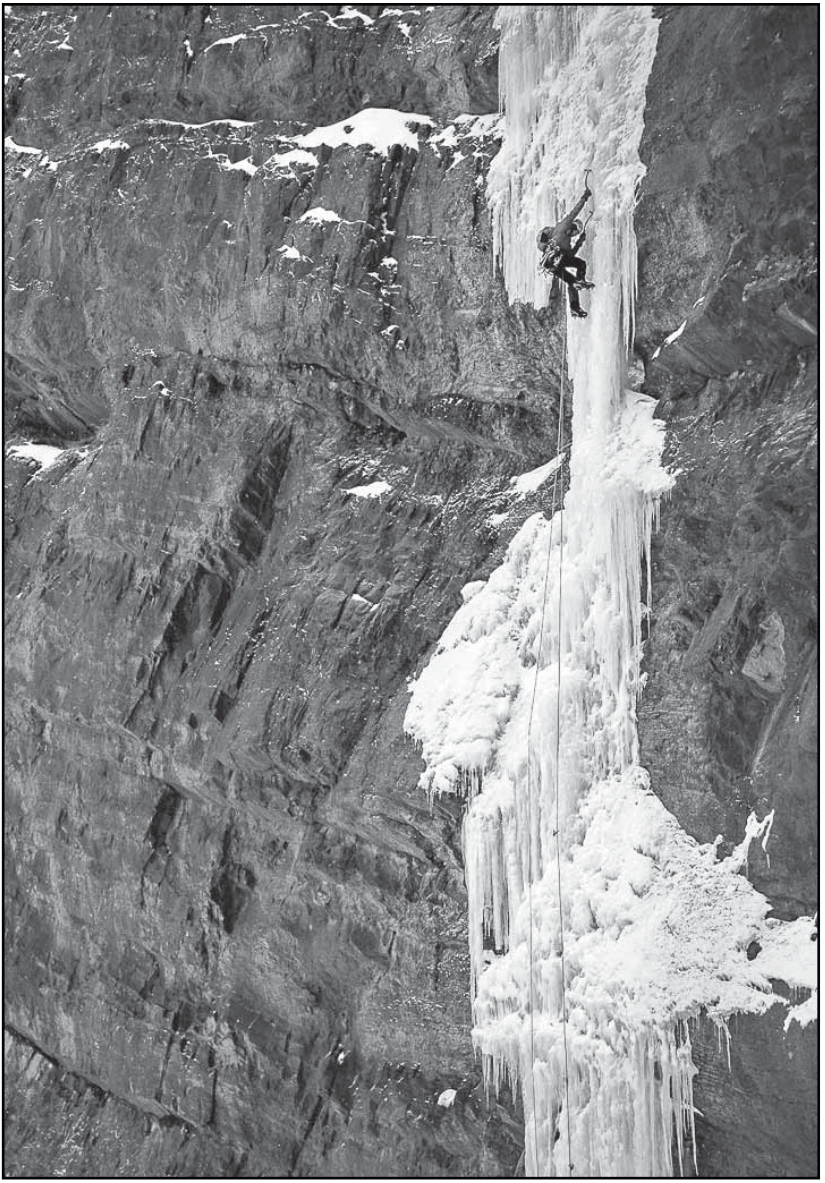
Inside a tent, Antarctica.

Human experience of adventure.

Portrait of an adventurer.

Flurry of activity, Antarctica.

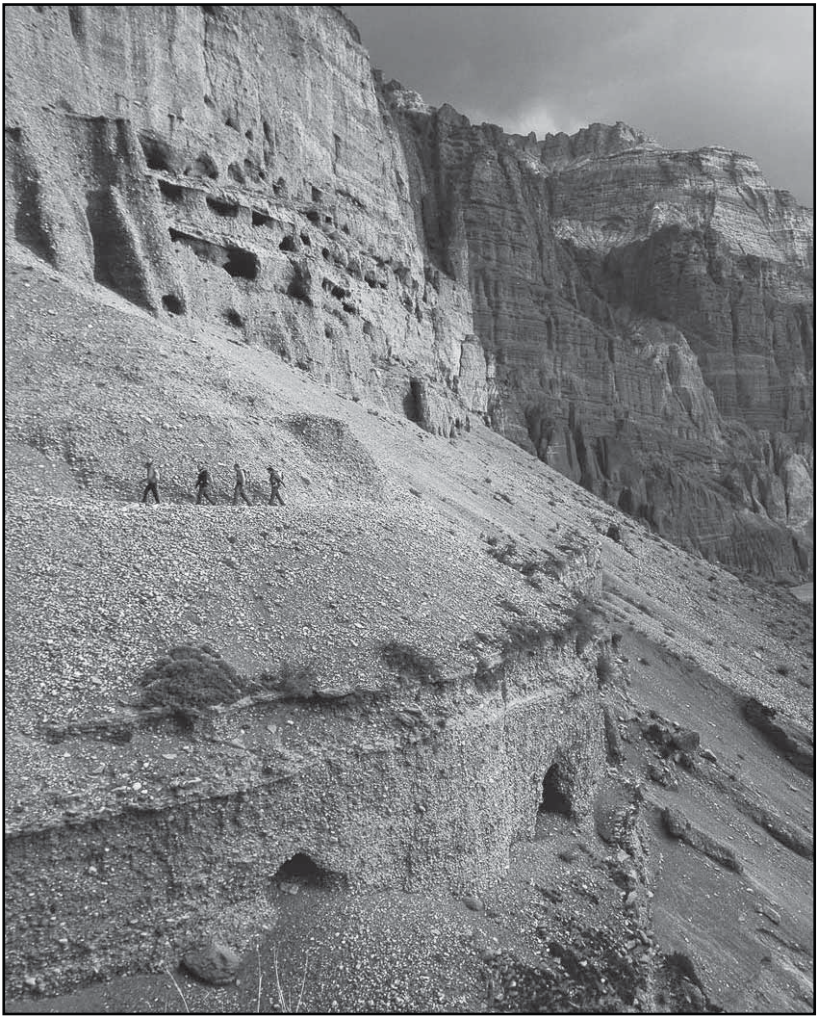
Tent in mountain landscape.



Single climber.

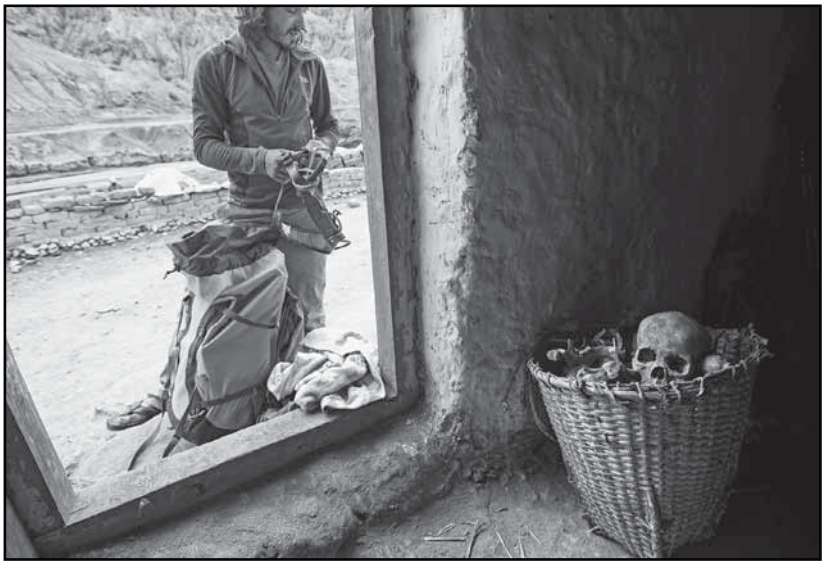
Broaden Your View

Lesson 2



Hikers isolated in landscape, Mustang (border of Nepal and Tibet).

Dirty, exhausted climber, Mustang.



Basket of human remains.

Gnarled hands.

Children, Choser village.

Bajau fishermen.

Bajau man and children.

Abandoned building, Krenkel Station, Heiss Island.

Stephen Alvarez—Adventure

Lessons 3–4

As a photographer, you can cover any number of subjects, but what gets many photographers excited is adventure. To go somewhere that's never been seen and share that experience with a larger world through photography is what many photographers truly love. You can think of adventure as anything that pushes you outside your comfort zone, such as the first time you travel to New York City or the first time you fly in a plane. Even walking down the street in beautiful light can be an adventure if you allow yourself to view the experience in that way.

Types of Adventure

Of course, adventure often requires physical exploration, such as climbing a mountain or discovering a cave. These situations present the opportunity to show people a world they may never have seen. In caves, for example, many times, the only way you can see what's around you is to make a photograph of it; otherwise, there's not enough light to even see the space you're in. As you take on more challenges, you'll become better at both the physical abilities needed for your particular brand of adventure and the knowledge you need as a photographer. Keep a list of places you'd like to explore that will enable you to broaden both skill sets.

In addition to photographing an adventure or expedition as it happens, you can also try to capture a historical expedition. In this case, you'll need to conduct research to learn how the adventurers traveled, where they went, and what they discovered.

Running large expeditions is difficult because they often involve many people. If you're the leader of such an expedition, be compassionate and understanding and lead by example to help people get things done. In adventure photography, much of the story is about the expedition itself. Be sure to shoot the food and equipment you take along, as well as the story of moving it to the site of your adventure.

One of the most enjoyable parts of any sort of expedition is working with the people who live in the places you're exploring. You'll be amazed at the willingness of these people to guide you and their efficiency in getting things done.

You can also, of course, go on adventures without traveling to the other side of the world. Even today, you can still discover sights that no one has seen before. And you can go on adventures within just a few miles of your home. Search out extreme landscapes or unexplored areas of a city, challenging yourself to view familiar sites with fresh eyes. One of the goals of photographers is to surprise people and bring them worlds they don't expect. Anyone can achieve this goal by applying the idea of exploration and adventure to everyday life.

Scene Setters

In any set of photos, one of the most important things you need is a scene setter. This would be the opener in a magazine essay, but it also applies to a family album. It's nice to have an image that sets the tone for everything that follows. You might simply shoot a scene in the fog to give a sense of mood or use a long exposure to capture the blur of lights and the frenetic energy of a city. Whenever you're traveling, look for a hotel room with a great view so that you can shoot right outside the window.

If you're doing a scene setter that's a landscape, consider putting people in the image to give viewers a human element to identify with and an idea of the scale of the environment. You might also try adding a nonhuman element, such as a plane, to prompt viewers to imagine what it would be like to experience that landscape in some way. A panorama is another interesting way to photograph a large landscape; you can assemble one out of multiple still images or use a camera that shoots panoramas automatically.

Shooting in Difficult Spots

In adventure photography, you often have to think carefully about where to position yourself to get the image you want. Consider whether you want to shoot from above or below. In some cases, you may not have much choice about where to stand. For example, if you're shooting a mountain climber from a distance, you may be standing on a small ledge, and your instinct

may be to use a long lens to zero in on your subject. But if you can't see your subject well enough and you can't change your position, it may be wise to zoom out a little bit to show the climber in context and let the viewer see more of the action. A 24-mm lens is a good one to use for adventure photography because it lets you get close enough to your subject but also include some context.

Another way to bring the viewer into the action is to use a remote camera and a very wide lens. You can mount a camera on top of a car, on the front of a motorcycle or boat, or even on the wing of a hang glider. You might also use a remote camera when your hands are busy doing something else, such as holding onto a raft. Remote cameras give you and your viewers a unique perspective and often let you see things that would be impossible to capture otherwise.

Strobe and Other Lighting

Of course, photographs are all about light. At National Geographic, it's often said that even if you have a picture of the Second Coming, if it's in bad light, it won't get published. For photographers, finding good light usually means getting up early and staying up late. You might also experiment with strobe lighting, which goes off quickly and freezes the action in a photograph. Or try to set up a tension between two light sources, such as strobe lighting in the front and a flashlight in the background. The image will still freeze but have a little bit of movement, lending it dynamism. Remember, you don't always have to use expensive photographic gear; a high-powered flashlight or a headlamp may be just the right piece of equipment.

Planning and Building Images

Sometimes, good images are built over time, meaning that it may well take more than one attempt in a place to make the photograph you want. Often, you may revisit a site at different times, adjust the lighting, use a different lens, or change small elements in the composition until you achieve the effect you're looking for.

Planning and close coordination are particularly important in adventure photography. For example, you may need radios to know when your subjects will be in position so that you'll be ready for the action when it happens.

Work closely with experts who are taking you to a site or with the subjects you're photographing to get an idea of how much time will be available to shoot and to choose the best position for yourself.

Of course, there are many situations and conditions that you can't plan for in photography, particularly those related to the weather. But don't automatically think that bad weather prevents you from shooting. Weather can change a scene quickly—even from one frame to the next. You may, in fact, make some of your strongest images in harsh weather conditions. Nighttime also presents challenging conditions for photography, but with a tripod and a cable release, you can shoot well after dark, opening up the magic of the night sky.

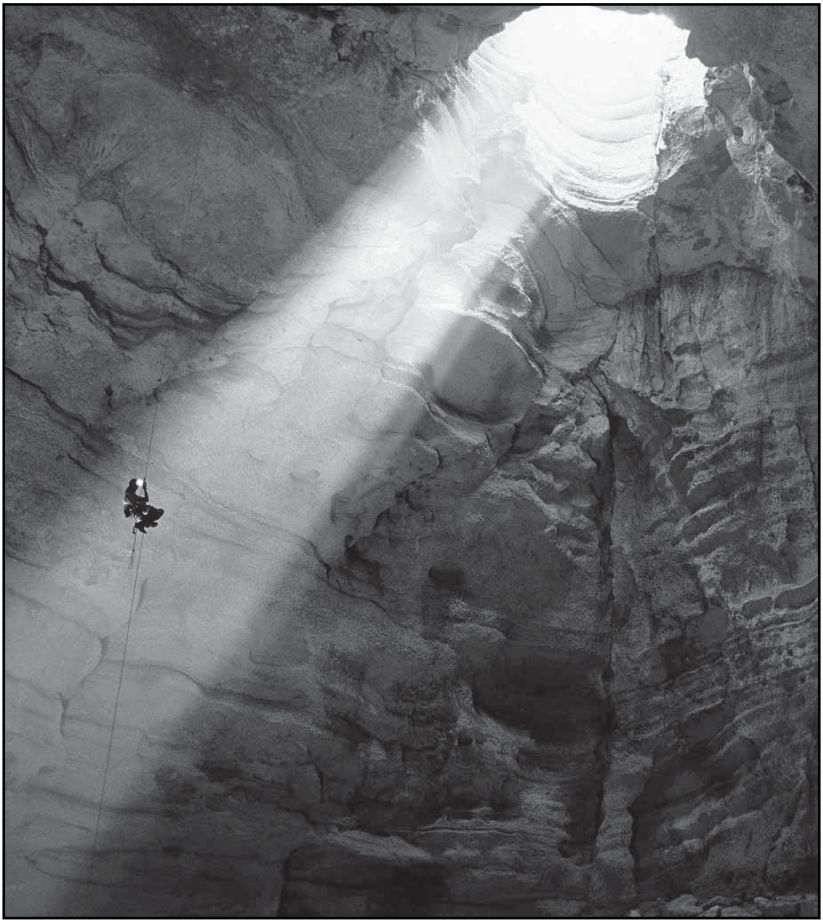
Assignment

1. Using a wide lens, find some action and get as close to it as you can. The subject doesn't have to be the feats of a caver or a mountain biker; it could be a child's birthday party. Fill your frame with the action.

Show What No One Has Shown

Lesson 3

All images in Lessons 3 and 4 © Stephen Alvarez.



Rappelling inside a cave.

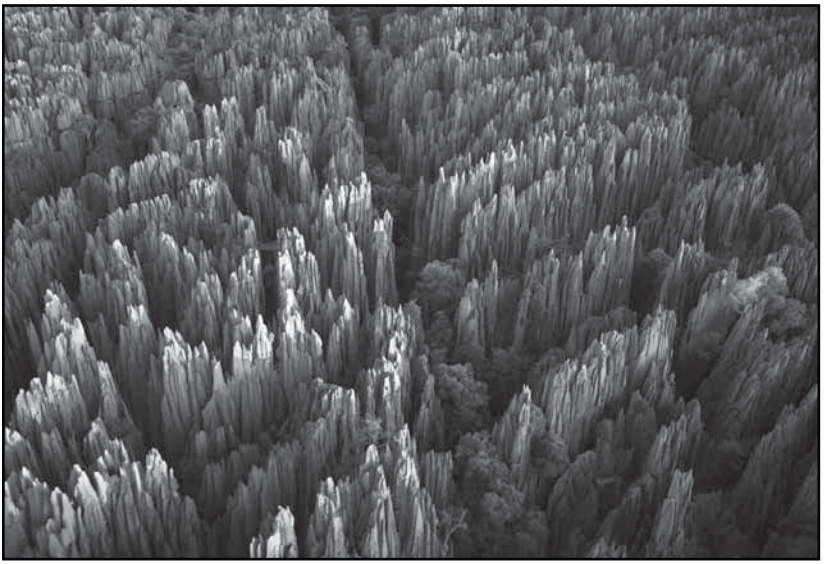
First swim on the Gulf Coast.

Small plane.

Cave exploration.

Local guides.

Moving an expedition.

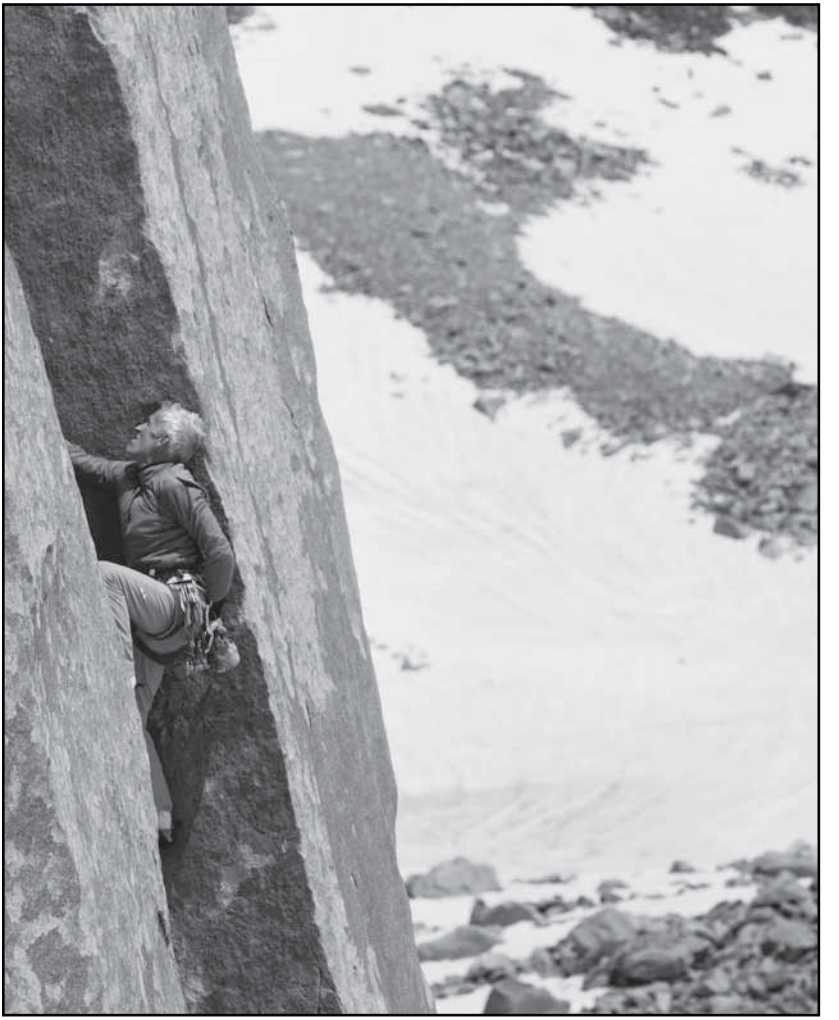


Extreme landscape.

Catacombs of Paris.

Set the Scene, Get Close

Lesson 4



Climbing expedition, Alam Kuh, Iran.

Waterfall.

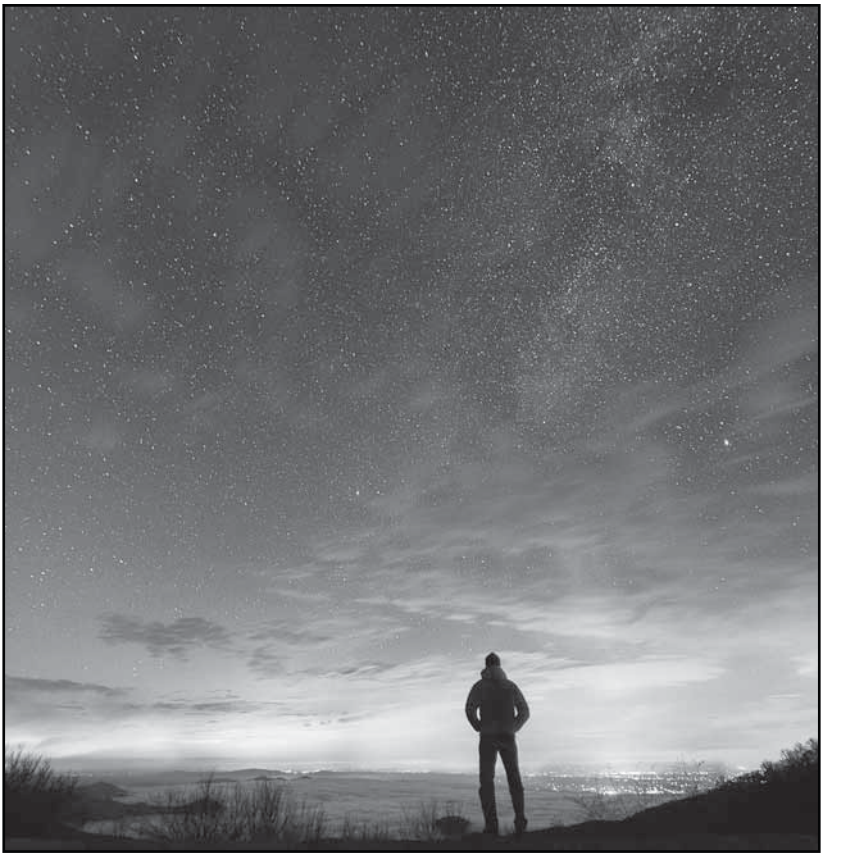
Mountain biker.

Motorcycle rider.

View from a hang glider, Outer Banks, NC.

Climber and waterfall.

Lightning.



Night sky.

Steve Winter—Wildlife

Lessons 5–6

The reaction of people to photographs of baby animals tells us that there isn't much difference between how we view people and how we view animals. We get an emotional connection with the eyes in photographs of both. We also have emotional connections with the activities of animals, such as a female tiger playing with or protecting her young. Wildlife photographers try to forge these emotional connections between the subjects and the viewers of their photographs for a number of reasons, perhaps most importantly, to interest the next generation in learning about animals and to encourage responsible stewardship of the natural world.

Researching Animals

In photographing animals, it's important to try to understand their behavior and movement. Learn the times when the animal you're interested in is active, when it feeds, and where it sleeps.

Because many wild animals are extremely secretive, you might try using a remote camera to photograph them. These cameras send out an infrared beam; when the beam is broken, the camera shoots a photograph. If you use a remote camera, take the time to find the right composition in the location where the image will be captured; you want the photograph to look exactly as it would if you were there and shooting it yourself.

If you're setting up a blind or a hide, find a tight area, that is, a location that doesn't allow the animal to move too much. A trail with a narrow choke point might be a good spot.

Do research on the animals you're interested in or talk to scientists or other experts to find out about unique events in the natural world, such as where and when certain animals lay their eggs. If you get a chance, photograph researchers working with animals or animals in a protective facility. Not only will you learn a great deal, but such opportunities show your viewers how animals contribute to our lives outside of television or the movies. Any

time you can get a photograph of an animal that is accessible to people, both the animal and the viewers win.

Many photographers focus on telling the story of animals and their relation to humans in the environment. For example, a photo essay on a tiger reserve might include images of the humans who compete with tigers for food or those who hunt tigers. Such photos of conflict between the human and the animal worlds also evoke an emotional reaction in the viewer.

Practicing Your Skills

One way to learn the photography skills you need in the field is to work in your own backyard. Not many of us have flamingos or quetzals in the backyard, but we all encounter birds every day. And photographing a bird in an exotic tree in the jungle is actually no different than photographing a bird outside your backdoor. Consider, for example, a bird flying against a white sky. A silhouette is a great way to handle this issue, and this solution applies whether you're at a neighborhood park or on safari. You can also practice the technique of follow focusing on birds by photographing your children running in the backyard with a toy bird taped to a broom handle; you'll notice that the children switch directions rapidly, just as birds often do. Photographing pets is good practice, too. Take pictures as your cat climbs a tree, playing with the light or how tight you're shooting.

Think, too, about drawing on other photography skills you've learned when you photograph animals. For example, the same instincts you use to capture an exciting moment in sports, such as scoring a goal or sliding into second base, can be applied to images of animals in action. Set the camera to shoot 10 frames per second; this setting is often used in sports photography, but it's also wonderful for capturing animal movement.

Whether you're on a safari and photographing a tiger or taking pictures of your dog in the backyard, pay attention to your subject's eyes. You'll often see the eyes focus on something of interest to the animal, and you can be prepared for it to make a move.

Getting Something Different

Throughout my career, I've worked with scientists that are studying the species that I'm working on. Many of the species I work with are extremely secretive, so I need to work hand in hand with the scientists when they're in the field to understand the animal's behavior, its movements, where it sleeps, where it lives, where it eats. One of the ways that I do that is to follow the scientists when they are capturing the animals for collared studies of big cats. …

Now, the scientists will dart the [animal], and these situations are very tense. It's high drama because the animal is the most important thing there. We have to worry about its health. But my job in these situations is to get a photograph instantaneously when the animal is darted and then try to get an image of science and biology that is an interesting photograph that we can put in the pages of *National Geographic*.

It's very important in images such as this that your eye can move around the frame. We have our subject, the tigress, that's lying on the ground

under sedation. And it's great to see the main scientist with his ear on her belly listening to the heartbeat of the cub, as she's pregnant. To move around while they're doing all the medical workup on the animal is vitally important—and to find new ways to shoot science.

Hey, every time I walk out in the field I have to find something that my editor has not seen before. … There's my photograph. Something a little bit different. And always coming back to the eyes.

Nature Photography Tools and Techniques

We all have camera bags full of gadgets, but we don't always use all the tools we have. These tools include different cameras or lenses, as well as different ideas and techniques we've learned. For example, try using a wide-angle lens when you would typically use a long lens or practice panning a scene. Trying something a little different can often make an ordinary situation extraordinary.

Lighting is as important in photographing animals as it is in shooting other subjects. Try lighting a frame in such a way that the borders are dark. Also, look for shadows that give an animal definition. That's one reason to shoot at dawn or dusk, when the sun is low in the sky—to capture shadows. You might even try over-lighting the bright areas of a photograph to achieve that definition.

When you're photographing animals, it's natural to focus directly on the subject, but it's often better to pull back a little bit and show some of the environment where the animal lives. Also, get down on eye level with animals, just as you do when photographing children.

As you're shooting, don't rely on editing your photographs later at the computer. You will make yourself a better photographer if you compose the scene carefully in the frame of the camera. Look for natural lines in your images and don't cut off any elements that will make an image seem out of balance.

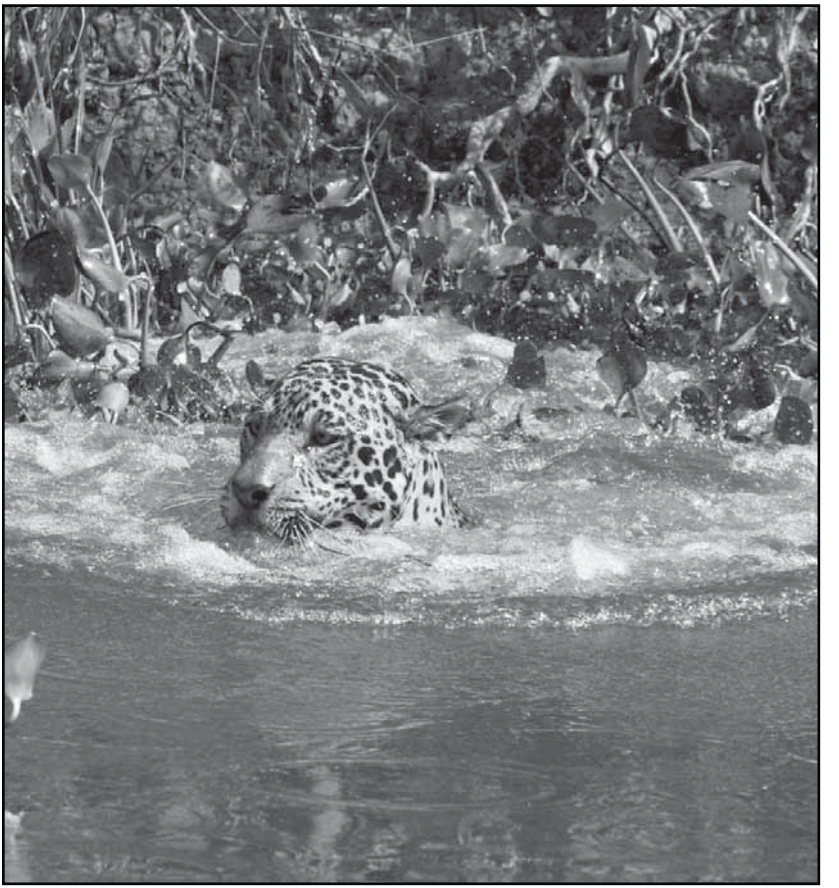
Whenever you have the chance to photograph an unusual animal or other subject, spend as much time and get as many photographs as you can, because you may never have that opportunity again. Even at night, put the camera on a tripod or use a high ISO and keep shooting. And never put off until tomorrow what you can photograph today. Don't rely on certain conditions, such as fog, to reappear when you're ready to take pictures.

Finally, when you're out in the field and you see a beautiful scene, ask yourself: What other photographs are here? Shoot from different angles or get in close for a tight shot. Try to see how you can take the blank slate that is the photograph in your mind and create it in the real world.

Assignment

1. Observe the animals in your neighborhood or your own pets and try to photograph them in a way that makes the ordinary extraordinary. Learn how to photograph a bird on a branch in your backyard, but compose the shot so that the eye moves naturally through the frame. Do a silhouette of a bird that you can really look at or pan your dog or cat as it moves through the yard. Think of your local park as the plains of Africa, the mountains of the Himalayas, or the jungles of the Amazon. And don't just do portraits—do environmental portraits.

All images in Lessons 5 and 6 © Steve Winter.



Swimming jaguar.

Baby chimpanzees.

Baby turtle.

Quetzal.

Jaguar in the grass.

Charging rhino.

Tigers playing.

Cuban iguana.

Quetzal silhouette.

Flamingo feeding its young.

Running tiger cub.

Tiger’s eyes.

Jaguar.

Elephants heading to water.

Zebras.

Crocodile hatching.

Joel Sartore—Wildlife

Lessons 7–8

Many photographers focus on wildlife because they love nature, but photographing wildlife is also a chance to make the world a better place. Many species are on the decline; by some estimates, we could lose up to half of all species by 2100. It's tragic to lose any species to extinction, and such losses can have serious repercussions for our own survival. Photographs and photographic projects, such as the Photo Ark, can help illuminate this problem and save many endangered animals on our planet.

Iconic Photographs

An iconic photograph is one that stands the test of time—perhaps even outlives its photographer. How can you achieve such photographs? The answer is: with thought and planning. You want to go beyond the obvious in your photographs. It's not enough just to get a tight shot of a bird in flight, for example. You want photographs that tell a story. And you can't do that by just getting off an airplane in some exotic location and looking for animals. Try storyboarding a shoot before you go out in the field to ensure you make the most of the time you have on site.

The three key elements of photography—light, composition, and moment—must come together to make an iconic photograph. Look, too, for anything that takes a scene beyond a simple, straightforward picture to something more imaginative or complicated, such as silhouettes or reflections. An iconic photo is not necessarily about using gear but about using your mind.

Consider, for example, a series of shots of wolves. You can take a straightforward picture of a wolf, a more interesting photo of a large wolf pack, or an even more imaginative shot of feeding wolves taken with a remote camera buried in a deer carcass. All these pictures speak about wolves, but they're all done in different ways, and they all require thought.

Many nature photography magazines and books are full of the same standard pictures: tight shots taken with a long lens of, say, bears in the water. If those

kind of straightforward pictures are what you like, by all means, shoot them. But photography is also about how you think—how you see the world and perceive things. You may get more interesting images if you try to stretch your imagination and creativity.

Telling a Story in Pictures

When you're creating a story with pictures—even if it's only a few images—make sure it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Try a long shot that sets the scene, then get in tighter on your subjects, and finally, show the climax of your story—perhaps hundreds of birds in flight. In the middle, build up your story with shots of the surroundings, including other people who have come to view the wildlife. And don't forget to try different techniques in your photographs; use a remote or put the camera on a tripod and try various time exposures.

Using Remotes with Wildlife

Photographing animals often requires different kinds of remote cameras. Some remotes operate with a simple cable release, while others are radio controlled. You can also set up a camera trap, which is a location with a remote camera that sends out an infrared pulse or beam. The camera and flash fire when something breaks that beam; in other words, the animal takes its own picture. Remotes are useful for showing animals up close but still behaving naturally—nesting, feeding, fighting, and so on. But keep in mind that you don't need expensive remote systems to get a good picture. Many times, you just need to be in place with a camera and ready to shoot.

Finding Subjects

Even small zoos and other captive facilities have interesting wildlife to photograph. Look for wildlife rehabilitators in your area; these are facilities that care for wild animals that have been injured or orphaned. Be sure to visit the nursery at rehabilitation facilities. Museums and nature centers may also offer access to wildlife. Sometimes zoos or rehabilitators have animals that are habituated to humans, such as birds that have been used in bird shows. You can get much closer to these animals to photograph them without startling them or scaring them away. With the help of a handler, you can often take your time and light the scene carefully. At the zoo, try using a long

lens to shoot through the wire of a cage. If you're standing close enough, the lens will blur the wire.

Of course, you don't have to go to distant locations to photograph wildlife; there are plenty of interesting creatures and plants in your own backyard, including insects and spiders, birds, turtles, and flowers. It's sometimes fun to shoot subjects that are small in scope and uncomplicated. Or decide on a project for yourself—a subject that's fascinating or special to you—and photograph it again and again over time.

Saving Wildlife

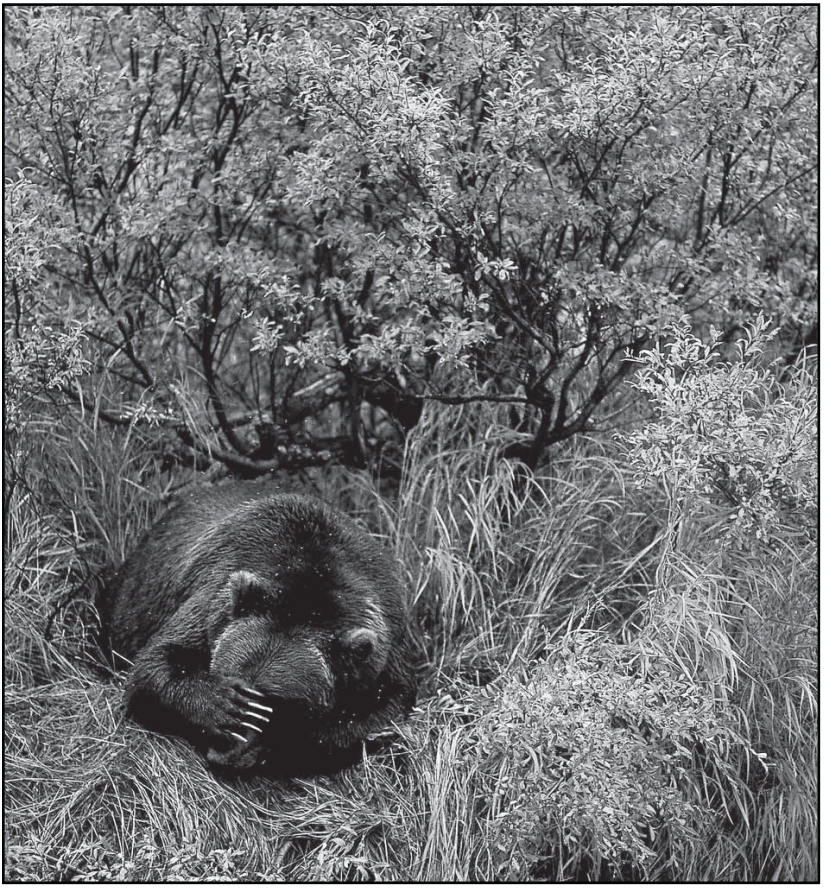
The Photo Ark is a project that grew out of the desire to increase the appreciation of the public for animals—to get people to see that they have beauty, curiosity, and intelligence, much as we do. Most of the photos in this project are shot in studio or controlled conditions, with the animals set against a black or white background. This simple backdrop draws viewers into the eyes of the animals and lets them see details they never could in nature. It also brings out the character of the animals—showing a turtle that looks as if it's smiling, for example, or a cheetah with soulful eyes.

With such projects as the Photo Ark—or any focus on wildlife photography—the photographer becomes a messenger for the cause of saving animals from extinction and setting aside some wilderness spaces for ourselves. The pictures are tools to draw people in, to encourage them to care about animals and learn about what drives species extinction. Such images have been used in campaigns to publicize the work of zoos and to educate people about the impact of hunting and other human occupations on animal populations. Even images that show details of what we might think of as insignificant animals—mice, snails, or sparrows—can bring about real-world results. A photo of the Florida grasshopper sparrow that appeared on a magazine cover prompted the Fish and Wildlife Service to devote resources to saving it. And for many photographers, that's the goal of wildlife photography: to educate the world about saving endangered species.

Assignment

1. Do a complete picture story or photo essay—one that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Start with a wide or establishing shot to show viewers where they are. Then, move into some sort of medium shot. Go in for some tight shots to show details of your subject and to give viewers some variety. Try to find something surprising if you can. Finally, look for a closing shot—maybe an animal walking away or a sunset. Take your time and revisit the scene if necessary to create a complete story.

All images in Lessons 7 and 8 © Joel Sartore.



Sleeping bear.

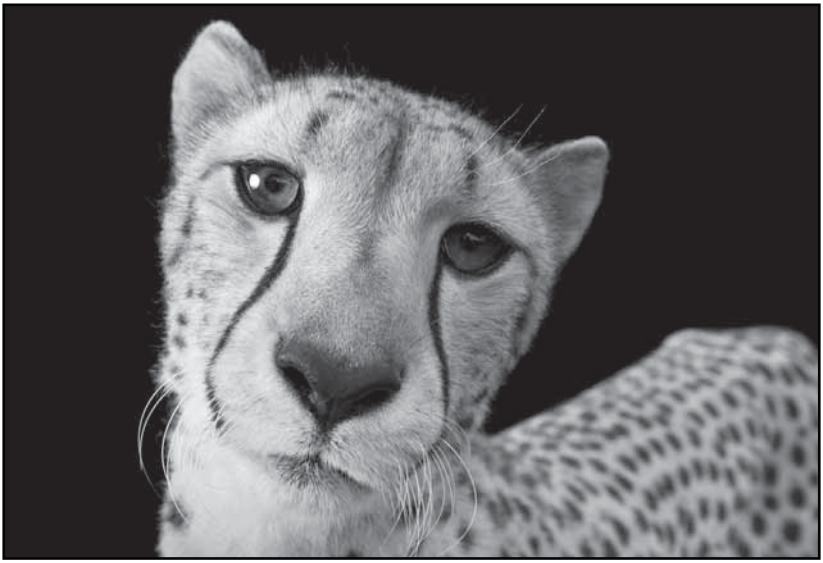
Wolf.

Rattlesnake.

Bats.

Mountain gorillas.

Lion.

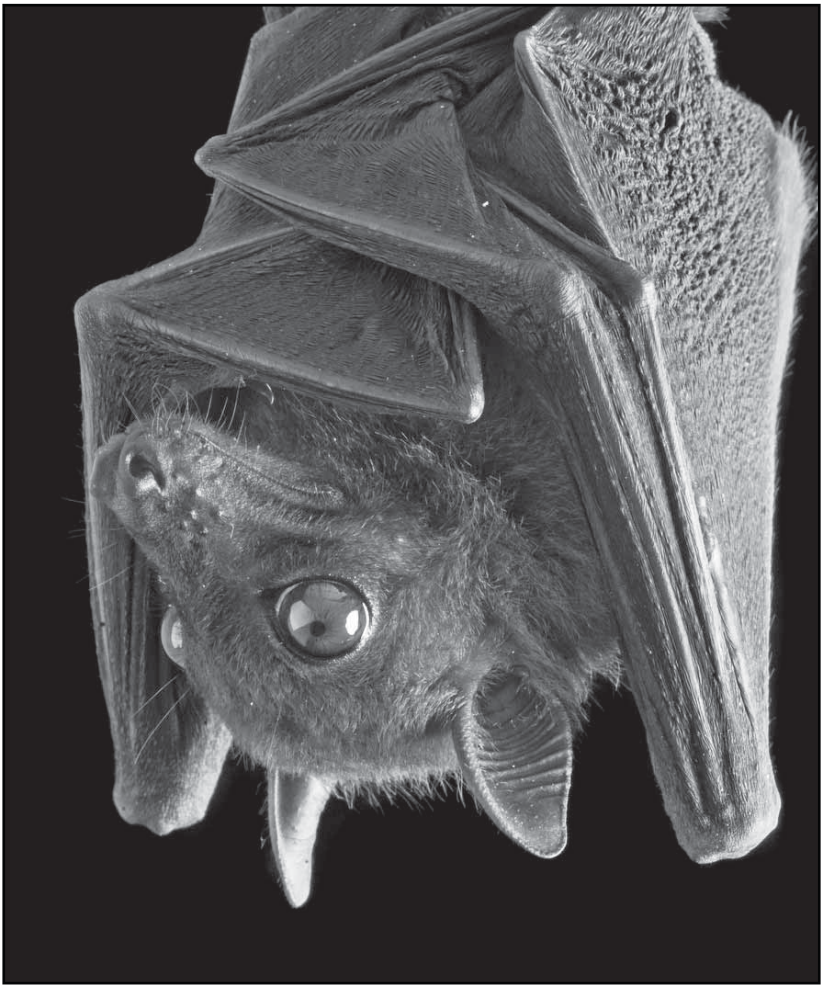


Cheetah, Photo Ark project.

Florida grasshopper sparrow.

Go Back, Get It Right

Lesson 8

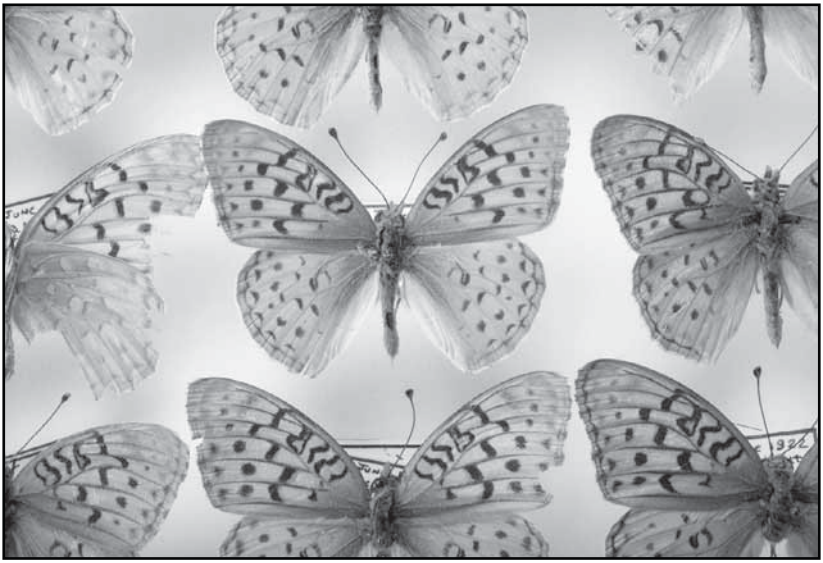


Bat.

Owl.

Box turtle.

Walruses.



Butterfly specimens, McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity.

Sandhill cranes.

Poisonous caterpillar.

Gibbon, Endangered Primate Rescue Center.

Jim Richardson—Landscape and Nature

Lessons 9–10

As long as people have been roaming the earth, we've been trying to read the land. Our brains are hard-wired to try to figure out what's going on in nature. Our senses evolved around taking in the landscape and making sense of it. For this reason, landscapes speak to all of us. Landscapes also bring us the joy of being in the moment with the earth—of seeing the sun pour over a river or watching lightning bolts shoot out of the sky. When we tell the story of the earth through landscape photography, we are telling the story of ourselves and our relationship to our home.

The Stories of Landscapes

Almost all landscapes have wonderful stories to tell—whether it's the wild, rugged Hebrides of Scotland or the great, sweeping plains of the American West. The ancient rocks and swirling mists in Scotland have inspired tales of witches, and the empty plains in the West evoke hardship and loneliness. In some places, you'll find that the great scenery sets the stage for the story you want to tell; in other places, you need to look more closely. But all landscapes speak to us as humans.

Not surprisingly, landscapes are often sedentary, without much action. But try to think about your landscape pictures as if you were putting on a play. In the theater, you would need scenery and lighting for mood and emphasis. You'd also need actors, a script, dialogue, and a narrative. Look for those kinds of elements in the landscapes you're shooting to tell their stories.

One trick to try in landscape photography is to go to the highest spot you can find in a location; once you're there, look for a way to capture elements in the foreground that give viewers some sense of where you're standing, along with the wonderful expanse of scenery in the background.

When you're photographing flowers, another secret is to get down in the middle of the flowers on their level and look across them, instead of

standing above them from a human viewpoint. When you're down on the ground, you can really see how the flowers work, and you get a sense of the symbiotic relationship they have with insects. You'll be amazed at the incredibly colorful landscape and the intricate details you can see from the ground.

A famous saying about photography is this: If you want to be a better photographer, stand in front of more interesting stuff. Anyone is a better photographer at the Grand Canyon than at the local car wash. Do research before you head out with your camera to find places where you're likely to capture interesting images.

Becoming a Better Photographer

Nobody is a born photographer. Even professional photographers learn their skills one at a time, just like everyone else. Decide on a new skill you'd like to add to your repertoire. Practice that skill until you internalize it, then start on another one. Figuring out what you can do with a new skill is part of the process of learning, and it's a great deal of fun.

For example, spend an evening with the same subject, experimenting with exposure and lighting. See what happens if you use a 30-second exposure and shake the camera on its tripod. Practice moving the light source as you shoot. Keep working the scene until you get good at whatever technique you're trying and get some interesting results. Then, try the new skill you've developed in other photographs.

One other reason to practice your skills is that you don't always have a great deal of time to get your shot. If you're in a hurry or the action in front of you is moving quickly, you want to have knowledge you can fall back on and a trained eye. If you've practiced looking for multiple ways to frame an image or finding different geometries in a scene, you can call on those skills quickly when you need them.

If you have to choose between being dogged and being talented, dogged is the right choice. Don't stop; work every scene as long as you can. Try staying in one spot for two or three hours and watching the light as it changes, or visit the same spot multiple times. Even if you think you've got the image

you want, keep asking yourself what else you can do. Convince yourself that the world has more to reveal to you, that you have more to learn, and that the landscape will tell you more stories that you can share with others.

Working the Shot

One of those places I found doing a lot of research was the Isle of Muck. … It's a little island out there in the small isles off the west coast of Scotland in the Inner Hebrides. It's only got 39 people. But I just fell in love with the name. I fell in love with the place, the idea of going out there, and so I went. And I knew that it was owned by the MacEwen family, and it might make some good pictures.

Sure enough, when we got there, out across the one road that goes a mile across the island, we found Lawrence MacEwen's farm. Found the horses out there wandering down the road. You think, boy, you know, if you can't make a picture with horses on an island and another island shrouded in clouds in the background, you're a pretty poor photographer.

So we stayed out there on the beach with the horses. Got to be real good friends with them. They got to be a little obnoxious, and they kept nudging around. But all of it was wonderful—wonderful pictures. The easy thing, having found it, would have been to just take the first picture. All of the pictures were good. All of the pictures were enough.

And yet, somehow, I just have this dogged sense that if I keep looking, I can probably do something that even I didn't think I could do, something I didn't expect I could do. So we followed the horses around out on the beach. They went wandering out there toward the shore. The clouds in the background were great. …

And then somehow or another, I got this idea of getting down low, just getting a piece of the horses that came by. So I'm crawling around

there. I'm sticking the camera down on the ground. I'm shooting every kind of angle I can.

And finally, I do something that kind of surprised me: just the horse. I always noticed this horse had a beautiful gray coat. It had this mane coming down. The island was in the background. The colors all came together. All of it came together.

And instead of a literal picture, it became a symbolic island picture. … This [picture] is the one that always makes my heart sing when I look at it, and it's one of the special pictures that I feel I got out of the Inner Hebrides.

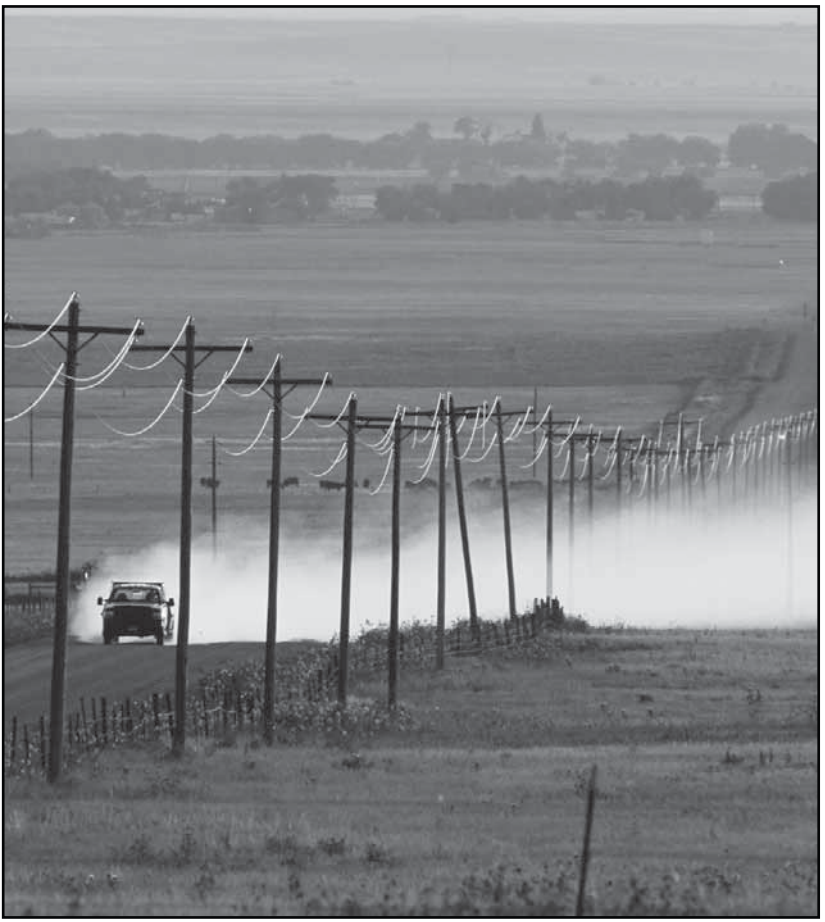
Assignment

1. Go back to some location close to your home that you've photographed before, some bit of nature that you love, some landscape that you're familiar with, or some landscape that you've done in a number of ways in the past but want to explore again. On your return visit, take a new bit of gear, practice a new technique, or raise your expectations about what shots you can get. Work the scene as thoroughly as you can, in both a metaphorical and a physical sense. Challenge yourself to come back with something you never expected you could do.

The Joys of Nature

Lesson 9

All images in Lessons 9 and 10 © Jim Richardson.



Long road, Colorado.

Rocky shoreline.

Stone houses.

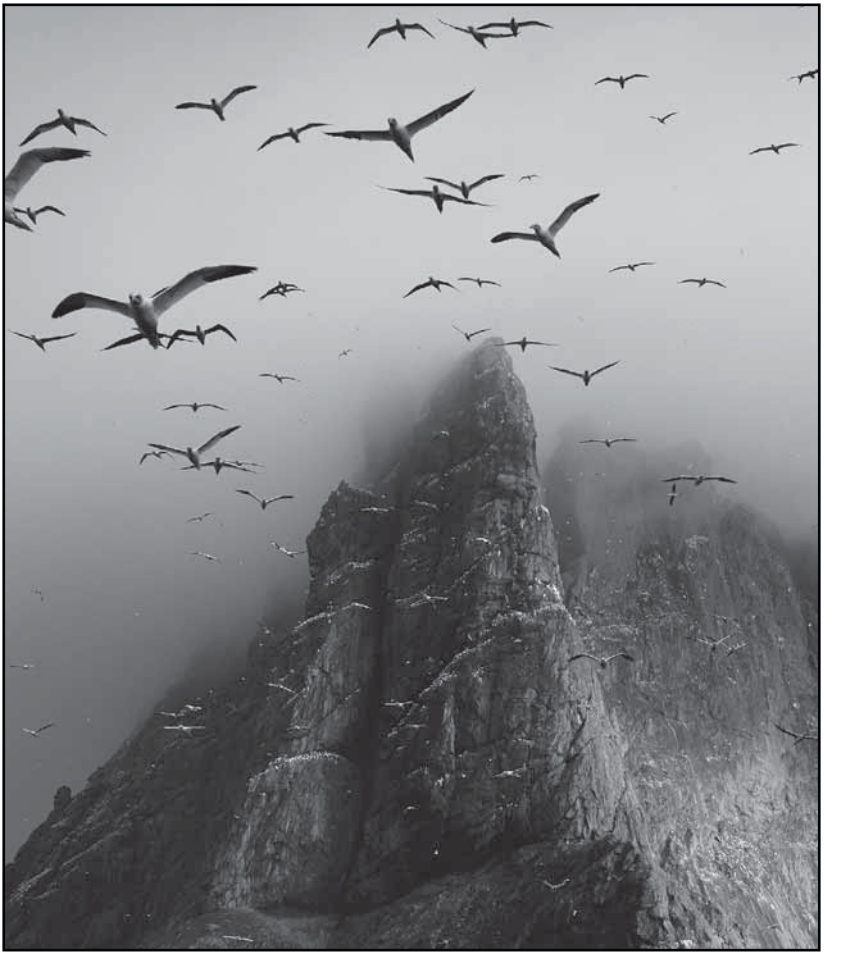
Shiant Isles.

Fingal's Cave.

Ardmore, SD.

Windmills.

Flowers.



Gannets, Boreray, St. Kilda.

Callanish Stones.

Rocky coast.

Inner Hebrides.

Inner Hebrides.

Country landscape, aerial view.

Mountain scene and reflection.

Lawrence MacEwen, Isle of Muck.

Michael Yamashita—Landscape and Nature

Lessons 11–12

In a Japanese garden, the designer prescribes certain views for visitors. In other words, the designer situates elements in the garden, such as a bridge or plantings, in such a way that visitors are encouraged to spend time contemplating these views and, perhaps, find meaning in them or come to new insights. Photographers hope to accomplish the same thing with their photographs—to prompt viewers to exercise their imaginations in looking at an image and gain a different perspective on the world. For this reason, the elements of photography are the same as the elements of design: concern for the foreground, middle ground, and background; composition; color; and so on. In these lessons, we'll see how these design concepts are applied to photography.

Good and Bad Light

You sometimes hear photographers talk about "bad light," but a professional can't always afford to wait for the perfect light. Working photographers have to shoot at all times of the day; thus, it's important to observe and understand the qualities of light throughout the day. You also need to know how to work with the light you have. For example, the solution to shooting in harsh midday light may be a greater awareness of subject placement. For some subjects, midday light may even be the best. For example, midday is the best time to capture the aqua color of the sea in the Bahamas or the prismatic hot springs in Yellowstone Park.

What photographers call "magic hour" is the time of day when the cool light of night meets the warm light of day. Of course, the best time to capture this light is at sunrise and sunset. Experiment with using light as the subject of your images, rather than just an element that illuminates the scene.

If you're in a city, don't put your camera away when the sun goes down. Focus on combining the electric lights of the city and cars with the cool light of the evening. Or photograph a scene very early in the morning, when the street lights are still on but the warm light of day is advancing. Don't put

your camera away when it's cloudy, foggy, or raining either. The "hide-and-seek" light of a cloudy day often provides dramatic impact, while fog lends an air of mystery, and rain results in wonderfully saturated colors.

Composition, Lines, and Patterns

If you want to see the best of classical composition, look at Japanese woodblock prints from the 15th century—that's how long the rule of thirds has been existence. According to this rule, you should divide your frame into thirds and place your subjects at the intersection points, both horizontally and vertically. In other words, avoid placing your main subject in the middle of the picture, which tends to be static and boring. Using the rule of thirds can, of course, result in beautiful images, but we also know that rules are made to be broken. In general, as long as you keep the eye moving around the frame and taking in each area of a photograph, use the composition that you feel looks best.

Look for natural frames to put around your subject and direct the viewer's attention. Frames can be anything—part of a manmade structure, the branches of a tree, the ropes of a boat—whatever focuses the eye on the main subject of an image. Use leading lines in the same way—to bring viewers into a photograph. You can use light or color as a leading line, as well as other elements in the image, such as a bridge or road. In addition to straight lines, S curves also provide a guide to take the eye into a frame.

Patterns and textures make interesting elements in a photograph, particularly when they're broken or interrupted in some way. Consider, for example, a pattern of frost on the windshield of a car; your eye is directed to the largest frost crystal because it breaks the pattern of the smaller ones. The same thing is true of a field of dandelions, interrupted by a barn in the background.

Unrepeatable Moments

Often, what makes a photograph special is the fact that it captures an unrepeatable moment in time. And it's the photographer's job to be in the right place, at the right time, with the right subject—and to know when to press the shutter—to record those moments. When you're shooting a scene, visualize the elements you want in your image. If you're looking at children running on a beach, for example, ask yourself how you want to see them:

Separated or in a group? What do you want in the background? Do you want the water receding or crashing into shore? Keep shooting as you wait for all the elements to come together to give you that unrepeatable moment.

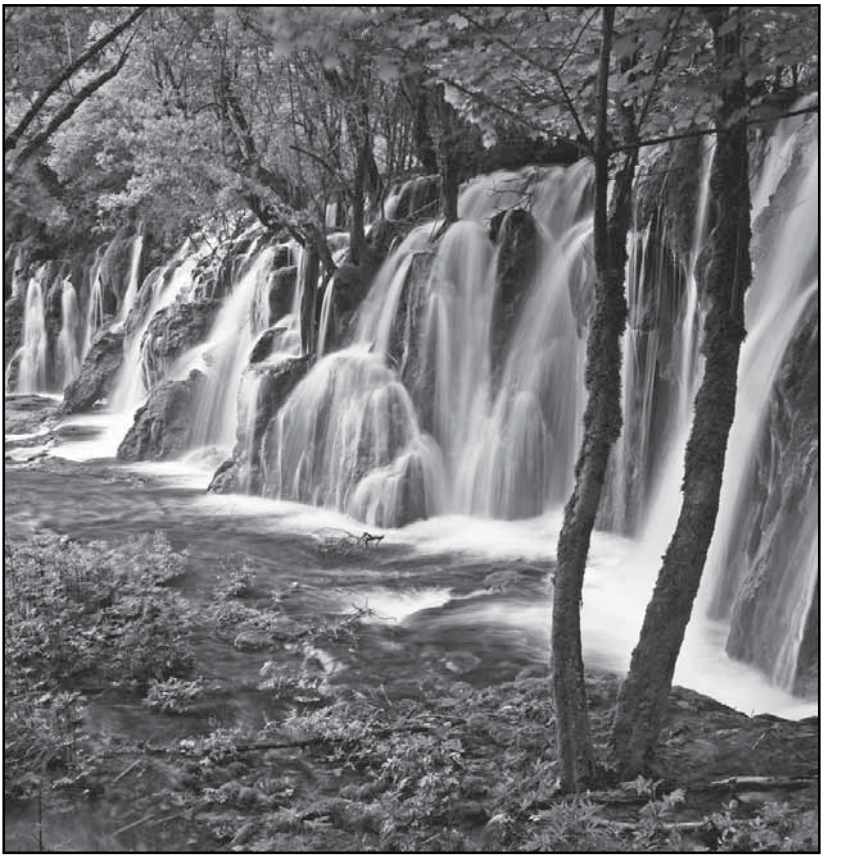
Assignment

1. Capture an unrepeatable moment in a landscape. As you shoot the scene, look for the element that will set one particular image apart from any others you take in the sequence.

Guide the Eye

Lesson 11

All images in Lessons 11 and 12 © Michael Yamashita.



Waterfalls.

Japanese garden.

Sevenfold bridge.

Koi.

Horses in snow.

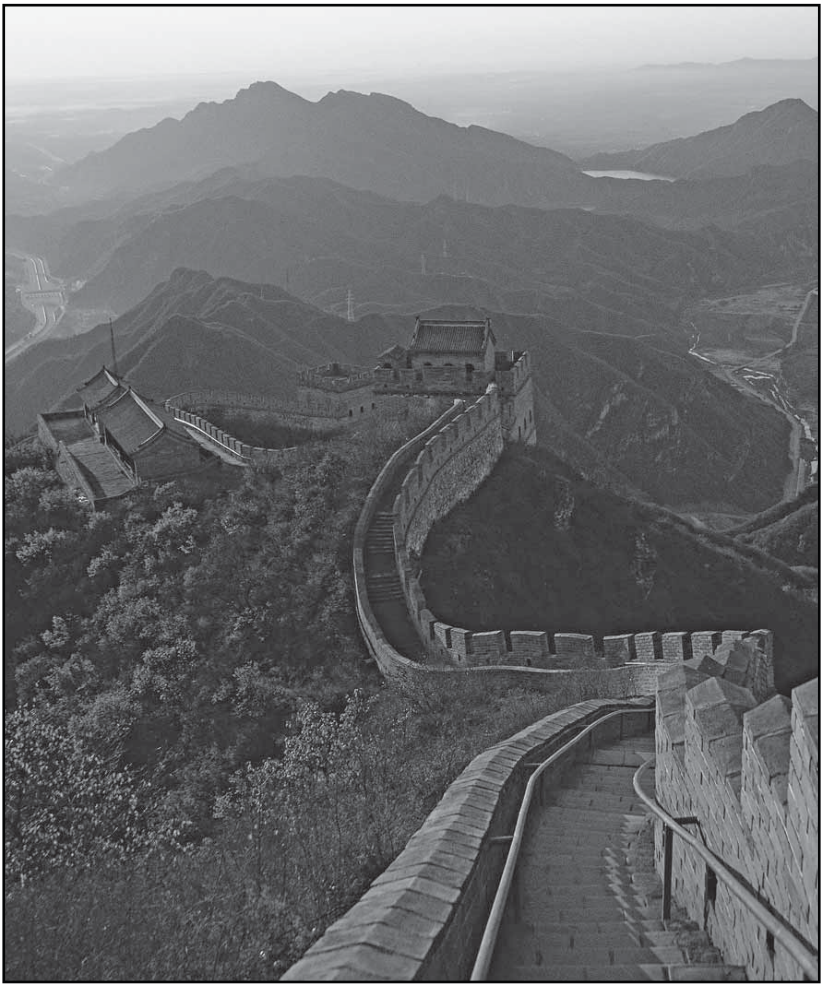
Vermont road in winter.

Camels in desert.

Mountain in clouds.

Moment in Landscape

Lesson 12



Great Wall of China.

Container port, Hong Kong.

San Marco Square, Venice.

Bridge, Matsumoto Castle.

Kawagebo, sacred mountain.

Tibetan pilgrims.

Great Wall and sheep.

Forbidden City.

Jodi Cobb—People in Their Environments

Lessons 13–14

Always keep in mind that photography is communication: You are telling a story in every image. And you need to be clear about what that story is and what the message is that you want to convey. Some photographers have a passionate curiosity about people; they're attracted to stories that explore the human heart and condition. Others are interested in ideas, cultures, and traditions—particularly those that may be disappearing in the modern world. In these lessons, we'll look at the challenges of gaining access to the private worlds of other people for those who are drawn to these subjects.

Approaching Subjects

Approaching people to get permission to photograph them is difficult for many photographers. In these situations, your attitude is important. Don't be timid or apologetic. You need to be confident to win your subject's trust. At the same time, you need to be honest with the people you approach. Tell them what you're doing, and don't make promises you can't keep. Treat potential subjects with respect. And remember, you're not the only photographer in the world. If you aren't nice to potential subjects, someone else will come along behind you and get the images you want.

The more time you have to spend with a subject, the better your photographs will be. But even if you have only a very short time with someone, try to establish a relationship. For whatever reason, you've singled certain subjects out for your attention; show them that they're special.

Working with People

Everyone has a pose in front of a camera; even dogs have poses! The key is to outwait that pose and wait for the real person—or dog—to emerge. Learning to become invisible is also important for photographers who specialize in photographing people, as is being able to anticipate when a moment will happen.

Even if you're traveling around the world, look for everyday moments between people—a couple whispering or a man gently touching his wife. Such ordinary moments often make extraordinary photographs. And remember that you don't have to have a face or even a person in a picture to imply humans and humanity. Sometimes, just a gesture or a shadow is enough.

Composition and Shooting Tips

The rule of thirds is a classic guideline of composition. According to this rule, you should mentally divide an image into nine equal parts using two horizontal lines and two vertical lines and place important elements in the image either along those lines or at their intersections. Although these guidelines can be helpful, photographs that break the rule can also have impact.

When you're focused in on one small part of a picture, it often helps to keep pulling back to see how much you can get in the image and still have it hold together. Try to include as many elements in the picture as you can, as long as they're all relevant. Be aware, too, of layering in photographs; look for something that's happening from the front of the image all the way to the back.

Look for reflective surfaces in your pictures. If there are mirrors in the environment, use them, but make sure that anything going on in the mirror adds to the picture, rather than detracting from it.

Digital photography has changed the field a great deal. You can now trust that your camera is smart enough to sort out pictures and interpret colors in very low light.

The difference between a photographer and a tourist is the amount of time you spend shooting something. Professional photographers stay with a situation and keep working it. You're often experimenting and making decisions as you're working, but don't stop shooting; you can never return and re-create the same situation and conditions.

Changing the World with Pictures

I got into photography because I wanted to change the world, but this [story] is the closest that I've actually come. It's a story on 21st-century slaves, the trafficking of human beings around the world, which is now the world's second largest criminal activity, a $150 billion a year industry. It's a story about how 27 million people are bought and sold against their will, held captive, brutalized, and exploited for profit.

I proposed the story to the *Geographic* after reading about the passage of the anti-trafficking act of 2000. And it was something that I really knew that I needed to explore and find out more about. But I had no idea if *National Geographic* would publish it or even if I could do it. It was the hardest story that I ever tried to do. And I was in danger, in fear, or in tears the entire time.

There are more slaves today than [during] the four centuries of the African slave trade combined. Tens of thousands of children are trafficked internally in West Africa. It's the abuse of a tradition where kids used to be sent to the cities to live with relatives and work as domestics in exchange for an education and a chance for a better life. But it's now become a professional trafficking operation. The kids are sold by destitute parents or kidnapped. And they now become actual slaves, like this little mechanic in Benin. …

Huge numbers of women are sold, lured, and tricked into the commercial sex industry worldwide. It's true that some do enter knowingly, but they have no idea what's in store for them. And they have no knowledge that they're going to end up enslaved. They live and work in these cages. [A woman's] entire world is this one little area where she sleeps and entertains her clients; her kitchen is underneath, where she cooks her meals. …

This story got the biggest response in the history of National Geographic until then. And it wasn't just people writing and saying,

"great story." But it was people who were wanting to help and give back in their own ways. It was FBI agents asking to be trained in trafficking issues and people who were sending in money to the organizations that are working to help. These are people who now don't think of prostitution as a victimless crime. And they don't think that buying stuff really cheap is as fun as they used to—who now realize that there is no cheaper labor than a slave.

Assignment

1. Photograph love or beauty and what it means to you. Don't look for an illustration of what you think it is but explore what it means. Your image doesn't have to show love between two people or a beautiful flower of some sort. Feel the emotions of love or beauty and interpret them in your own way, in your own style, and in the way that you want to show to others.

Gaining Trust

Lesson 13

All images in Lessons 13 and 14 © Jodi Cobb.

Santas, New York, NY.

Queen's garden party, rooftop view.

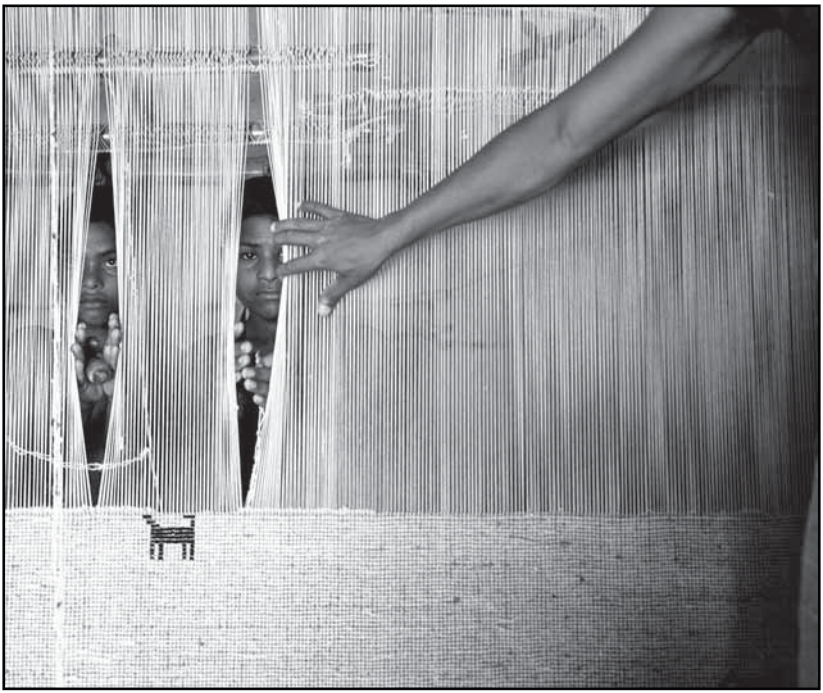
Saudi Arabian woman.

Woman reflected in window.

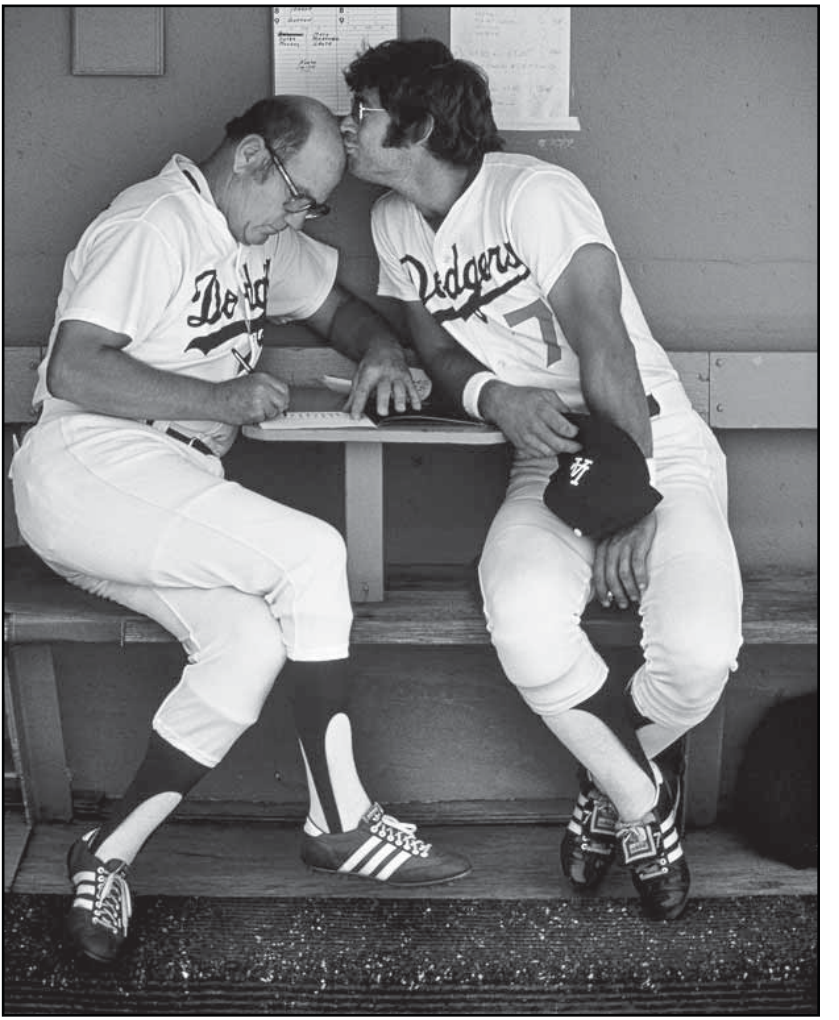
Public performance of geisha.

Geisha laughing.

Geisha.



Child weavers, India.



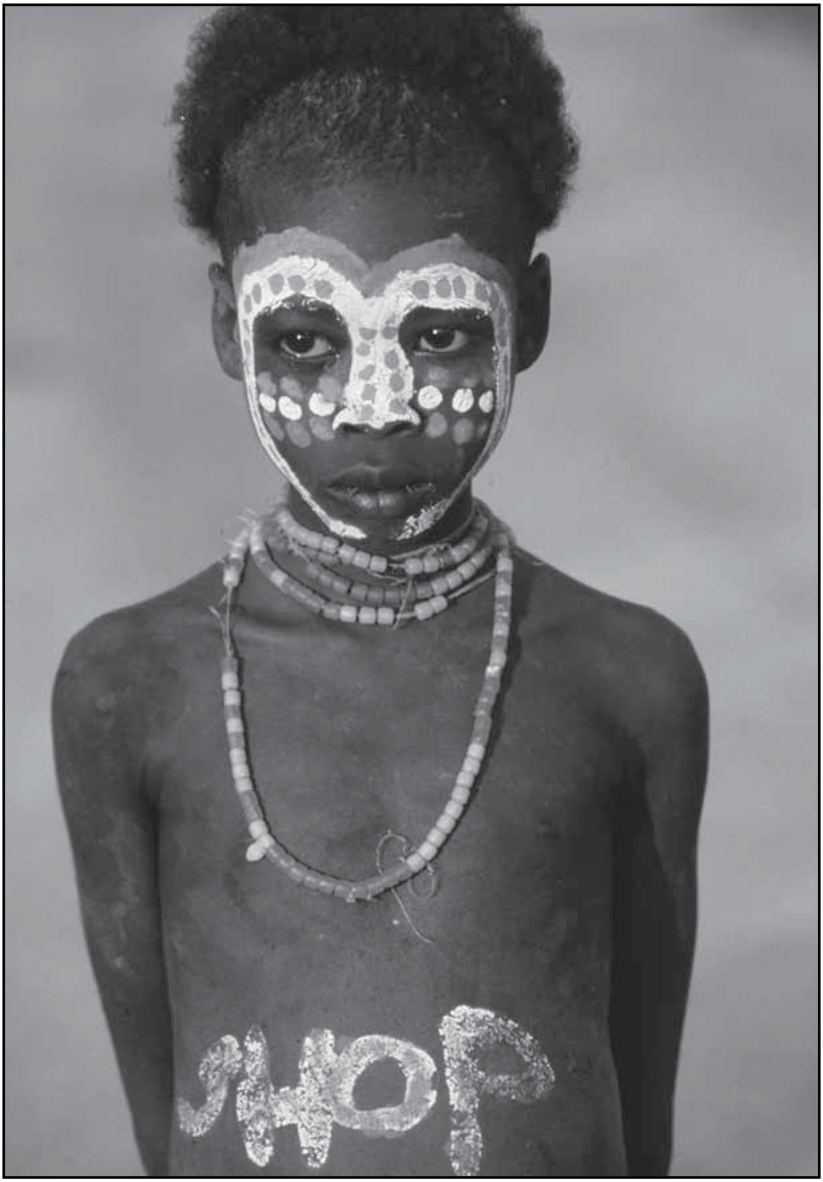
Baseball player and coach, Los Angeles.

Woman reading Italian newspaper.

Young couple.

Mass wedding, Taiwan.

Cowboy and pickup truck, Texas.



Boy selling jewelry, Ethiopia.

Brothers in truck.

Cowboy shadow.

Ira Block—People in Their Environments

Lessons 15–16

Many photographers start out shooting landscapes rather than people. Landscapes enable you to practice composition, learn to fill your frame effectively, and train your eye to see pictures in a different way. But it's also true that you can make more emotional pictures by adding people. Of course, one of the keys to photographing people is to interact well with them. Talk to your subjects about what they know or what interests them. After you've gained their confidence, you can sometimes become invisible, allowing you to get natural shots of people in their everyday environments.

Light, Composition, and Moment

When photographing people in their environments, don't just point and shoot. Think and shoot. You still need good light, good composition, and a good moment or gesture. Working with light—for example, using silhouettes and shadows—adds drama to your photographs. Sometimes natural light is all you need, but you don't have to depend on it. Add your own light sources—even candlelight or headlights from a car—or put lights in odd places to add interest to your images. Introducing your own light sources helps you balance your subjects with the backgrounds. These days, you can boost the ISO on your camera up to a high number and shoot in any kind of light, but be aware of the quality of the light: harsh or soft, scattered or focused, and so on.

Of the three elements of a good photograph, composition is the one you have the most control over, so take advantage of that first. Be aware of all the small positive elements that can help make a good image. If you're shooting a portrait, try having the subject look both into the camera and off to the side. Shoot subjects from a low angle to eliminate a cluttered background, and get down on the same eye level as children. Remember, too, that an angular composition has more impact than a horizontal or vertical one.

Besides light and composition, moment or gesture is important in photographs. Look for interesting body language in your subjects, or find odd or strange elements, such as masks or stilts, in the environment. Such elements intrigue viewers, prompting them to wonder what's going on in your photographs. Keep in mind, too, that you don't always need a face; some images can be emblematic, showing the tools of your subjects' trade or the products of their labor. Even just the cowboy hats at a rodeo can tell a story without ever showing a face.

When the right light, composition, and moment come together, you know you will have a good image. But you need to be ready for those situations to occur. Sometimes, you may get lucky, but for the most part, you need to make your own luck—be aware of your surroundings and be on the lookout for something interesting to happen. You might try finding a good background, then waiting for someone to walk into it.

Environments and Activities

Like any story told with pictures, those that include people should capture the feeling of their environments and activities. With an explorer, for example, you want viewers to see the lonely and harsh environment in which he works, as well as his jubilation when he reaches his goal. Photographing people allows you to step into different cultures and lifestyles, broadening your own perspective on the world and the perspectives of your viewers.

If you're shooting at an event, look for images that are a little less obvious, which may mean shooting around the event. You may find great light filtering through a tree, a group of performers talking before going onstage, the activity of a waiting child, or beautiful costumes. Again, you might also try finding a good background at the event and waiting for something interesting to happen in front of it. Such shots don't capture the event itself, but they tell viewers about it.

Surprising Images

When you're photographing people, you need to be ready for surprising expressions or other great moments to happen. In a sense, a photographer is like an athlete—warmed up and in tune with the rhythm of the sport. When the ball comes, the athlete is ready to catch it. The same thing is true for a

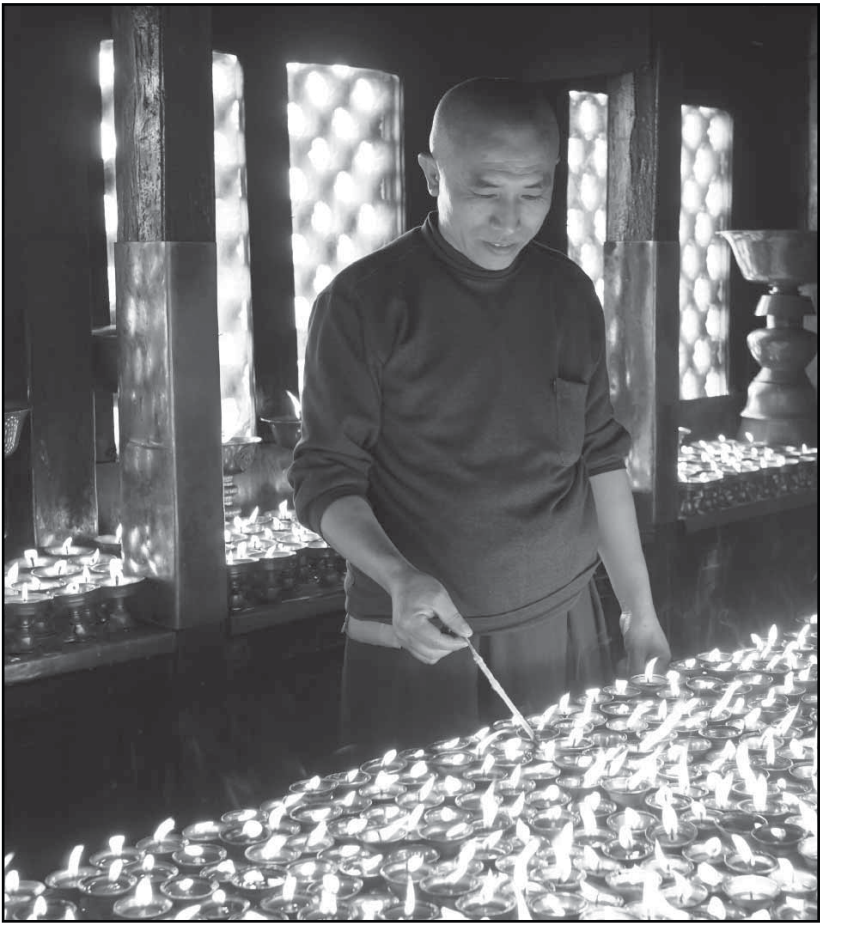
photographer. You don't want to be fumbling with your camera when a great moment occurs. Wherever you are, keep taking pictures to keep yourself warmed up. With digital cameras, you can shoot much more when you're in the action and later eliminate the pictures that don't work for you.

On many occasions, you may have a preconceived notion of the kind of images you want to shoot, but it's important stay open-minded. For example, you might be interested in the colorful costumes of a group of dancers, but you may then find that a shot of just their hands turns out to be the best. In other situations, you may think you have the right photo and then find something surprising around the corner. Again, stay with the situation; don't be satisfied. Shoot in different ways and from different angles; sometimes, only slight differences can make a stronger image. When you're in the heat of shooting, it's difficult to tell which picture is best. Wait until you're back home and can look through your images quietly to see which ones speak to you.

Assignment

1. Use someone you know as a model and try photographing that person in front of different backgrounds and from various angles. Be aware of the light and what's going on in the background. For a second challenge, find a bold background and wait for people to walk by to see what kind of pictures you can make.

All images in Lessons 15 and 16 © Ira Block.



Monk lighting candles.

First haircut ceremony.

Woman washing her face.

Portrait of a woman, Buddha series.

Monks having lunch.

Three masked boys, Peruvian Andes.

Young woman and shadows.

Emblems of olive growing.

Use the Background

Lesson 16

Man with blanket, Abu Dhabi.

Dancers before a performance.

Soldier kissing queen's guard.

Rodeo.

Native American women.

Dancer, Thailand.

Girl and bus, Cuba.

Girl with doll.

Michael Melford—Color and Light

Lessons 17–18

Every great photograph encompasses three elements: subject or content, composition, and light. You don't need any particularly complex gear to make a great photograph, and you don't need anything more than natural light, but it's helpful to understand the different kinds of light photographers look for and the effects light can lend to your images. In these lessons, we'll look at four kinds of light: diffuse light, side light, backlight, and magic light. We'll see which type of light is best for shooting various subjects, and we'll learn some specific tips for working in a range of lighting situations.

Diffuse Light

Beautiful, soft diffuse light is found on rainy, overcast days or foggy days. This is also the type of light you sometimes see after a storm has cleared and a mist forms. And you can find diffuse light in the early morning—before the sun comes up—or in the evening—just before it gets dark. At dusk, the sky lends an intense blue color to everything in the environment.

Diffuse light is the best for photographing flowers and foliage; in fact, if you photograph in a forest on a sunny day, you will not get good results. On sunny days, our eyes can see the difference between shadowy areas and bright areas, but the camera cannot. The result is overexposed images. If you're shooting flowers on a sunny day, position yourself in front of the sun to create a shadow and your own diffuse light.

On days when you have diffuse light, try putting your camera on a tripod. If it's windy, experiment with various slow shutter speeds to blur certain elements in your image and show motion. This is a good trick to try when photographing animals, too.

Side Light

Side light is found on sunny days—generally early in the morning or late in the afternoon—when the sun is at a right angle to you, rather than directly

overhead. This light often gives you nice detail in the foreground. Because it provides more contrast than diffuse light, side lighting can lend a kind of chiaroscuro effect to your images.

Side lighting is excellent for photographing people and animals. When you're shooting people and you can control the situation, try to have the light come across part of their faces, if possible.

Try using a polarizing filter with side light. These filters line up scattered light in the atmosphere, eliminating the scattering. They cut glare in your images and enhance colors, particularly of the sky or water.

Backlight

Backlight is also interesting to work with, but it's a little tricky because you're looking at the source of light. This type of lighting gives you interesting shadows and silhouettes. Keep in mind, though, that when you're photographing backlit people or animals, you may need to open the exposure a bit to get detail.

Shooting into the sun can sometimes cause lens flare, creating small spots in the camera. To eliminate this, cover up the sun with your hand as it falls on the front lens element. If you use a tripod, you can step out in front of your lens so that your shadow falls on it. You might also try hiding the sun behind something, such as a tree. When the sun is just coming up or going down, the atmosphere is sometimes so moist and dense that you don't get lens flare, and you can actually shoot right into the sun.

Backlighting sometimes results in a situation where the sky is much brighter than the foreground. Again, your eye can see the difference between the highlights and the shadows, but the camera, in general, cannot. In these situations, try a graduated neutral-density filter. It will darken the sky so that you can actually record it in the camera and avoid having to adjust it later with software.

Magic Light
Magic light occurs when the sun comes through the clouds and puts a spotlight on the landscape, lighting part of a scene in the same way that spotlights are used in the theater. It can happen at any time.

Capturing magic light results from a combination of luck and readiness. You have to move quickly when magic light occurs, but you can sometimes anticipate it by closely observing the clouds. Look for holes in the clouds where the sun is likely to peek through, then set up your shot and wait for the magic light to appear.

Preparing and Previsualizing
Before you travel to someplace new or even visit a new site in your town, do some scouting of the location. Go online and learn about the weather conditions, special events that take place at the site, and so on. Once you find a good location, previsualize an image you would like to make there. For example, if you're photographing a river, you might want to get an image of someone fly fishing there at sunrise. You may not get that exact shot, but previsualizing will help focus your mind.

Patience and Perseverance
One of the most important qualities of a photographer is patience. It's very rare to walk into a scene, take a picture, and capture a *National Geographic* moment. Most of the time, when you see a scene you think might make a good image, you have to stick with it. Settle down, watch the light change, and adjust your position with the light. Often, when you're shooting a sunset and the sun hits the horizon line, other photographers will pack up their gear and leave. But that's the time when the lighting usually starts to get good. Your best bet is to stay put and keep working the shot.

As you're working a scene, use different lenses—wide angle, telephoto, and normal—to try to see something different. Observe the clouds to anticipate the light. Adjust your own position to shift the composition. Keep checking the display on the back of the camera and ask yourself: How can I make this shot better? If you've frozen the action, try slowing down the shutter speed to capture some movement.

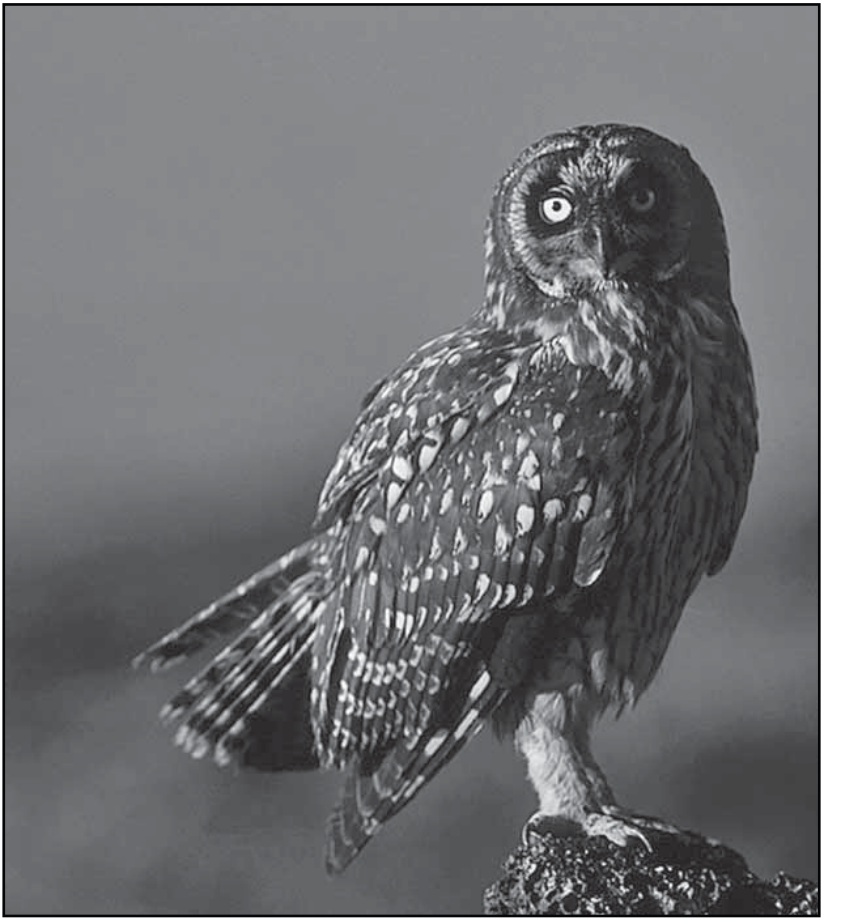
You may have to stay at a site for several hours or revisit it over the course of a day or two. If you find that one particular scene isn't working, drive a short distance away and look for a new location. Your perseverance and patience will pay off. At the very least, you've spent some enjoyable time experiencing nature and at the best, you have a beautiful image to frame and hang on your wall.

Assignment

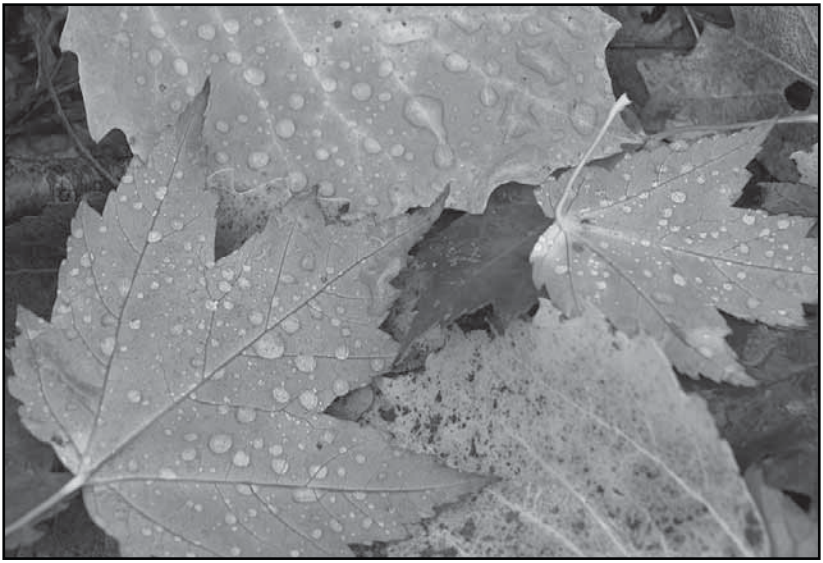
1. Find a subject near your home and photograph it repeatedly in different lighting situations—early sunrise, middle of the day, sunset, and so on. Try this assignment with a tree in your backyard. Get out of bed at 5:00 a.m. and start photographing the tree—it's a great way to start the day.

Good, Bad, and Magic Light

Lesson 17



Side-lit owl.



Water droplets on leaves.

Side-lit sand dunes, Glen Canyon.

Guide boat, Adirondacks.

Backlit deer.

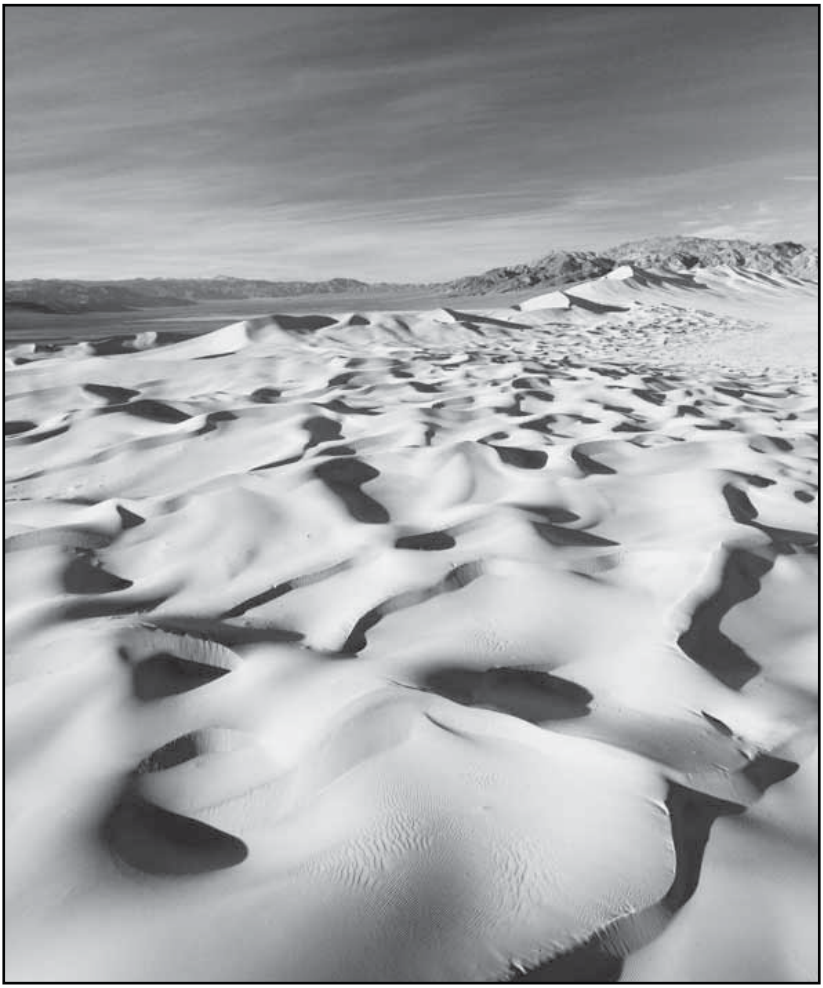
Calving glacier, Alaska.

Light coming under clouds.

Magic light on water.

Wait and Work the Shot

Lesson 18



Death Valley.

Winter scene, Delaware.

Mountain stream.

Mountain scene.

Beach, New Zealand.

Crashing waves.

Moving surf.

Moving clouds.

Annie Griffiths—Color and Light

Lessons 19–20

As we all know, light is the most elemental part of any photograph, yet it's easy to neglect. The word *photograph* actually means "writing with light," and we can all learn to write better by exploring and understanding light. We're also all familiar with the color wheel that shows primary colors and complementary or clashing colors. Strong colors of either kind provide powerful bursts in your images, but primary and complementary colors also come in softer hues, lending images a sense of quiet and elegance. As you experiment with light and color in your photographs, you'll come to appreciate the range of emotions these two elements can communicate.

The Effects of Light on Color

We all know that the light in the morning and the evening is very colorful, especially if it's been dusty or after a storm. That's because the atmosphere actually comes through the dust or water in the sky and refracts light, creating colors. Dust tends to create oranges, and water tends to create pinks and purples.

Bad weather often makes great pictures, in part because certain colors that can set a mood appear only in bad weather. Think about the feeling of cold conveyed by pure white ice or the intimate softness created by a snowfall. In a blizzard, the snow can blow so hard that it actually washes out the colors in the environment, again, showing viewers how cold and threatening the scene really is.

Experimenting with Color

Try putting a very vivid color against its opposite color in the spectrum. But be careful in your composition to ensure that nothing competes with the colors. You don't want anything to distract from the palette you've chosen. Try to plan where you place color in an image as much as possible.

Softer hues create a different kind of palette from strong primary or complementary colors—one that is often a little more elegant. You can

usually find soft, elegant colors before the sun rises or after it sets. Situations in which there isn't much color can also be lovely; think of the limited palette of the desert and the quiet mood it conveys.

There are times when just a small pop of color will complete an image or liven up a scene that's not particularly interesting. Imagine, for example, a dull, gray sky with a blue balloon sailing by. In a scene with a limited palette, look for a dash of color to make the image stronger. A pop of color can draw the eye to something that viewers might otherwise miss or serve as a leading line through an image. Color can also be used to frame the edges of an image that has a monochromatic palette.

If you want the focus of an image to be a person's expression or a moment in time, you may want the palette of that image to be very simple. In fact, it's always smart to eliminate anything that will distract from a beautiful moment in a photograph. Sometimes, the only way you can limit your palette is by getting very close. Exclude distractions in the surroundings by maintaining a tight focus on your subject and the color you're trying to capture.

You might also try to find a location with an appealing color palette and just wait there for something interesting to happen. Visit the spot at different times of the day—in the early morning before there are too many people or cars around, at night if you know the scene will be lit, or in the late afternoon as the light gets softer. Stay with the scene, follow the light and the colors throughout the day, and look for different compositions to present themselves.

The Personalities of Color

Of course, color provokes emotional reactions in viewers and can communicate subtle messages. For example, images of a *quinceañera* might feature pink because such celebrations signify the coming out of a daughter among Hispanic populations. Learning to understand the feeling that colors evoke in people will help you know how to deliver information with color alone.

Have fun exploring the different personalities of colors. For example, a deep, frosty blue makes viewers shiver; other blues can be calming or cooling. Red

is passionate, powerful, and fiery. Try playing with red at a slower exposure and letting it move. Photograph some dancers costumed in red, and let the colors be imperfect and blended. Use the personalities of color to your advantage by choosing a composition within a specific color palette.

Two colors that are often neglected in discussing color photography are black and white. Even with color film, black and white can create a moody or frightening image. Using white can lend an elegant, soft feel to images, evoking innocence, stillness, simplicity, and beauty. Black and white can be useful in an image because they don't distract viewers from the point you're trying to make with lots of competing colors. There are also many tonalities within blacks and whites, and those tonalities can help you learn about tonalities in other colors.

Following the Light

An interesting challenge to set for yourself is to follow the light in the scenes you're photographing and allow it to choose what you shoot. You'll often find that light can lead viewers through an image and serve as the element that holds a composition together. Try placing your subject in a puddle of light and allowing the rest of the image to go dark. Or shoot a landscape on a cloudy day, when the light is coming and going; photograph different parts of the scene as the light touches them. Another fun exercise is to look for balance in light—when the inside light starts to match the outside light.

Light is imperfect—it moves and changes; it can be dappled or fractured. Dappled light—like that coming through the leaves of trees—can be particularly appealing, adding little sparkles of light throughout an image.

When you're photographing a person, remember the importance of capturing a catch light in the eye. To viewers, this little bead of light feels like a window to the soul and makes them feel closer to the subject. Have your subject follow your finger as you move it until you see the catch light in his or her eyes.

Silhouettes and Backlighting

Backlighting is among the most beautiful kinds of light. Silhouettes are, of course, the ultimate use of backlighting, but it can also be used as a kind of

rim or frame for a subject. Nature photographers often use backlighting on days when the sun is harsh, and fashion photographers also use it frequently, for example, lighting a model from behind to show the softness of her hair. Backlighting and silhouette sometimes lend an intimate, spiritual feel to subjects and can show details that you might otherwise not notice.

If you're making a silhouette, look for a moment when the subject comes into some kind of action or activity so that you can see the character defined.

Try shooting silhouettes when you have subjects that can be defined by color and light. For example, shoot right into the sun to get a deep, deep red, and let your subject turn to silhouette completely. If the subject is a recognizable shape, you can often underexpose the frame to get richer color. Try working on either side of the correct exposure to play with colors.

Other Lighting Considerations

The best advice you get about flash is this: Turn it off. In many cases, flash is unnecessary if you're paying attention to natural light. The goal with flash should be that the viewer doesn't realize that it's been used in an image. Learn to work with shutter speed and pop just a little bit of flash onto the scene if necessary.

Open shade exists where there is shade apart from the sun. It's even and beautiful—very much like studio light. Usually, if you can move people into a doorway or beside a window, you'll get open shade and a much lovelier picture. Expose for the face and flesh tones and let the background be dark behind your subjects.

Finally, whenever you're photographing an event or you're in a staged setting, remember that a lighting engineer has usually been there before you. Your job is to capture the light that the engineer has carefully designed and created.

Assignment

1. Choose a subject you're passionate about, perhaps your children or even your pet. Then, try out some of the color and lighting concepts discussed in these lessons. For example, try a silhouette; play with exposure of the silhouette during the daytime and in the evening. Or see what you can do with open shade. Try photographing your subject in the light of a window or door. Put your full passion into your work and try to stretch beyond anything you've done before.

Compose with Color

Lesson 19

All images in Lessons 19 and 20 © Annie Griffiths.

Silhouetted giraffe.

Performer.

Dancers.

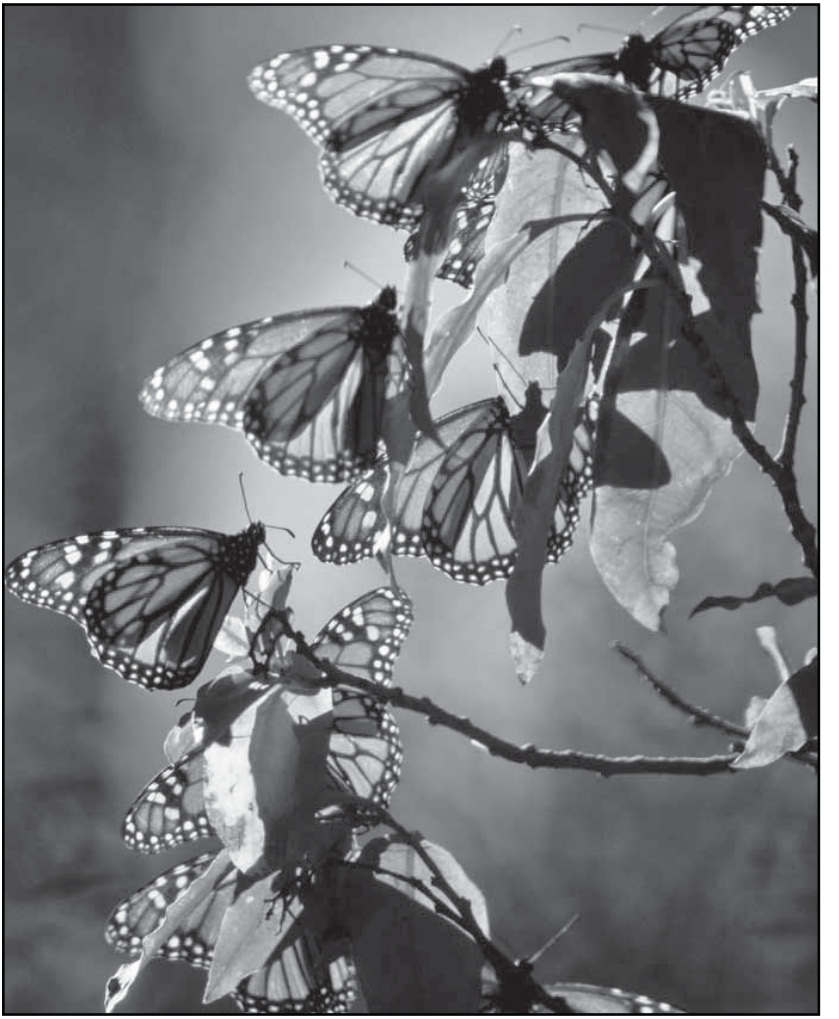
Fireworks, Sydney harbor.

Moody scene.

Spider web.

Man and horse in snow.

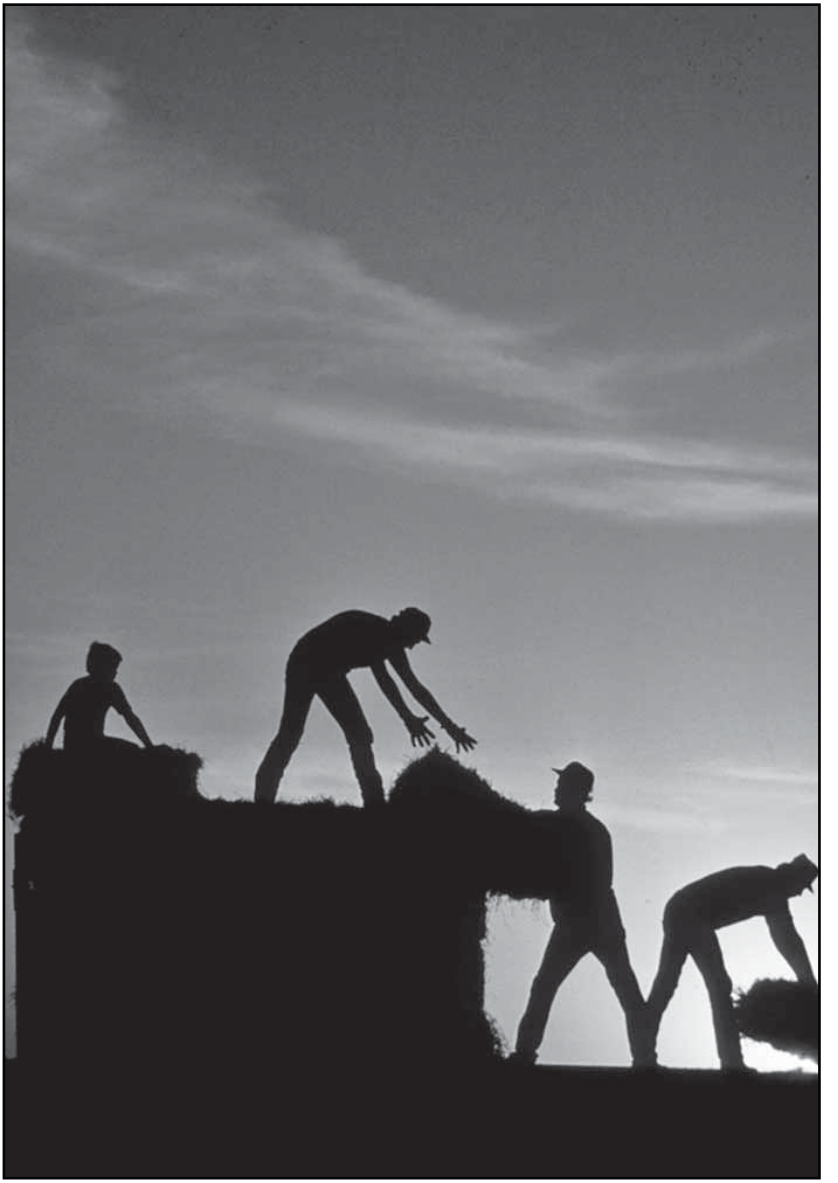
Saint Louis arch.



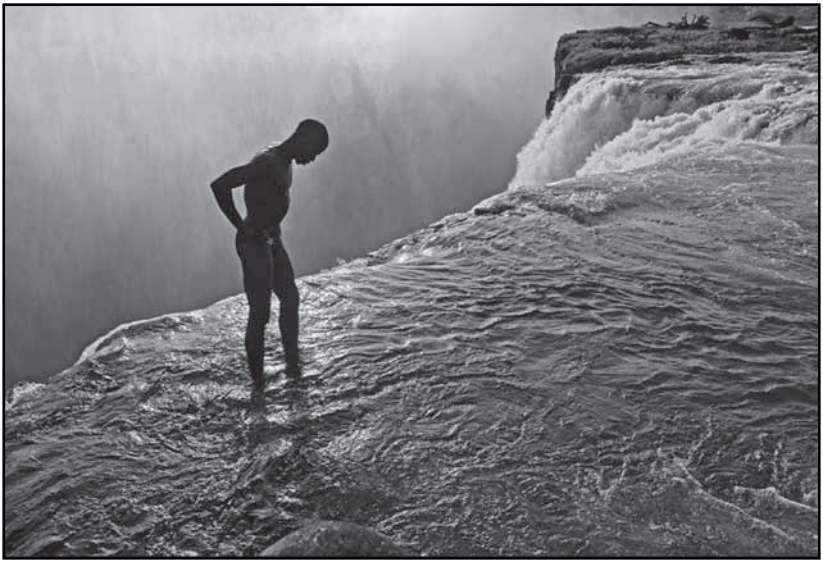
Butterflies.

Girl in dappled light.

Boy in hammock.



Men working, silhouetted.



Man at Victoria Falls.

Church.

Mother and children.

Rancher.

William Albert Allard—Storytelling

Lessons 21–22

Professional photographers often travel the world to produce photographic essays, but anyone can tell a story with pictures without buying a plane ticket to a faraway place. You can tell a story about the neighborhood you live in or your own backyard. The elements of lighting, composition, and other aspects of photography discussed in this course apply to wherever and whatever you decide your story will be.

Building Stories through Pictures

When you're building a story through pictures—whether it's about a country, a neighborhood, or a subculture—look for images that give the viewer a sense of place. This is vital to the story. You need pictures that say something about where you are, what it's like to look around the place you're in, what others might see there, and—if the picture is good enough—what it might feel like to be there. Think, too, about what the people who live in this place are like—not just how they dress, but how they look when they reveal themselves while working, at play, or in quiet, intimate moments.

How do you get access in a new environment? Tell the subject who you are, what you're doing, and why you think it's important to tell this particular story—perhaps to show a way of life that may be dissimilar to many others but may explain how certain people live, even though they're vastly different.

Using Portraits in Stories

Portraits are a wonderful addition to a photographic essay. You can think of portraits in your work as either found or produced. Found portraits include those of people you see in a café or on the street and with whom you usually have no communication. Produced portraits are those of people you approach and make arrangements to photograph. Many times, these are made in an interior, as opposed to outside. Very often, the strength of a portrait is found in the eyes, but that doesn't mean your subject always has to be looking at the camera. A good portrait may find its strength in a moment or a gesture, or

it may show good use of negative space. Look particularly to see where your subjects' gestures lead the eyes of the viewers.

When you make a portrait of someone in your story, do it with the hope that the viewer will connect with your subject in an intimate way. That's aiming high, but if the portrait is well made, it can introduce the person in the photograph to a viewer who may live a continent away or speak a different language. Somehow, if the connection is strong enough, viewers may feel as if they have come to know something about the person in the photograph—perhaps even what that person might be like to know as a friend. When working on a photographic essay, your primary intent should be to show the people and the place with a sense of intimacy—to show the environment and the ambiance, whether it's a landscape, a cityscape, or the interior of a home or café.

Using Available Light

Of course, light is really what photography is all about. It's a fact that some of the most attractive light for photography can be had in the early and late hours of a sunny day because at those times, the shadows are long, and that low, skimming light can give form to your subject and bring warmth to color. The French have a wonderful saying about the soft light of dusk, with its subtleness and its questioning. They refer to dusk—the time when it's neither light nor dark—as the time between dogs and wolves.

Beautiful light can also come from diffusion. When light reflects onto subjects, it carves around the shapes of their faces. But it's also true that you can make good pictures in almost any light. Even if it's midday and the shadows are hard and harsh, try to use them. In essence, there's no such thing as bad light; the key is to know how to use the light you're given to get a good picture. One of the most interesting aspects of photography is discovering how to use the available light in any situation.

Staying with the Shot

When you are in an environment with strong visual stimuli, it may seem that pictures are everywhere. It's in those moments that you have to be careful as a photographer. Remind yourself to slow down and think about the pictures you're making. Imagine a quail hunter firing his gun as a bevy of birds takes

flight. If he doesn't pick a target—a bird—he may not get any game. When you're surrounded by good pictures, pick a bird—stay with that picture for a while. And don't be afraid to make mistakes. All photographers make mistakes, but the key is to look at your mistakes and see what makes them interesting so that you can learn from them in the future.

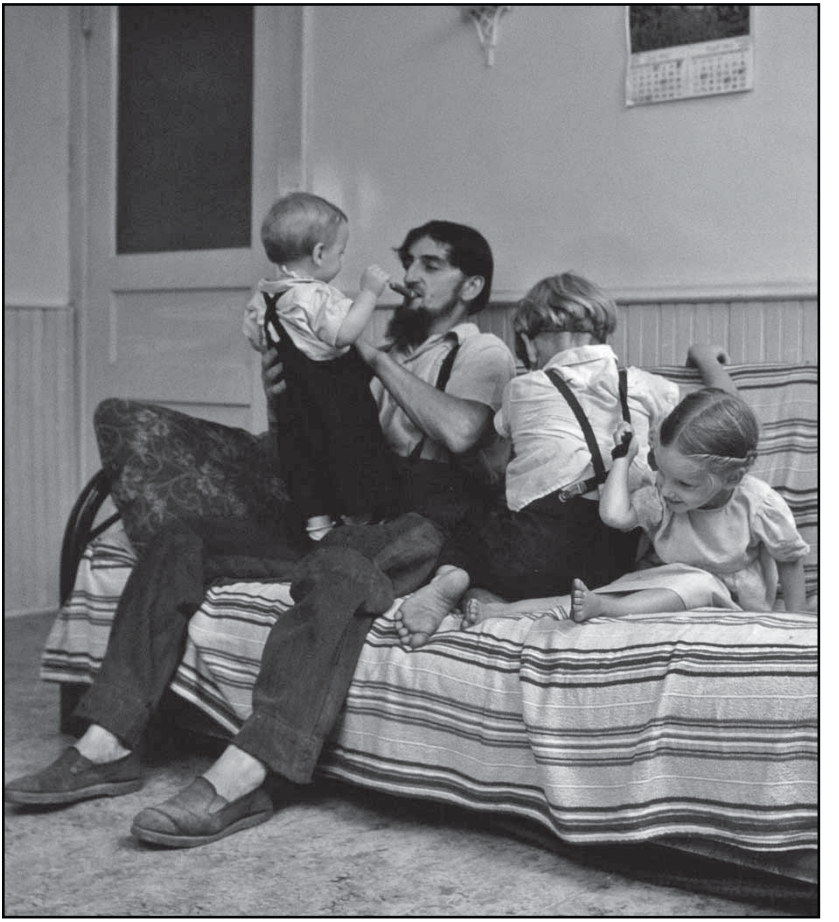
As you're shooting, you may find that much of your work is serendipitous. You go out looking for something, and you find something else that's beyond your original expectations. You need to be able to react quickly to these situations. You should also remember to keep looking and moving the elements in your picture. Don't make the same picture over and over again. The difference between a fine picture and a truly fine picture is often a matter of inches. Bend your knees or take a half step to the left. And always get rid of anything extraneous in your photographs. Think of a photograph as a piece of writing by Hemingway: Eliminate what you don't need.

Assembling the Puzzle

When laying out a photographic essay, look first for a lead picture, that is, some image that sets a tone, presents a place, or announces a theme. This is the image that might best bring a sense of place to the story. Then, look for an image that seems suitable to bring the essay to an end. In between, think of yourself as assembling the pieces of a puzzle—one that might come together in an infinite number of ways. Each of us may put that puzzle together differently because we don't all see in the same way.

Assignment

1. Take your camera to a place that you have never been before and where there are people you don't know. Try a city block, a store, or a public park. Do a photographic essay on that place and the people who are there, making sure to get permission from the people you will photograph. Don't try to finish this assignment in a few hours, days, or even a month. Pursue the subject for as long as you like, trying to find a sense of connection and excitement about the challenge. If the first place you choose doesn't seem to work out, try another, but only if you think you've exhausted the first choice. Work hard, but enjoy the assignment, and don't be afraid to make mistakes.



Melvin Stoltfuz, Amish farmer, with his children.

Amish barn raising.

One-room school.

Man with frock coat, Paris.

Rainy street, Paris.

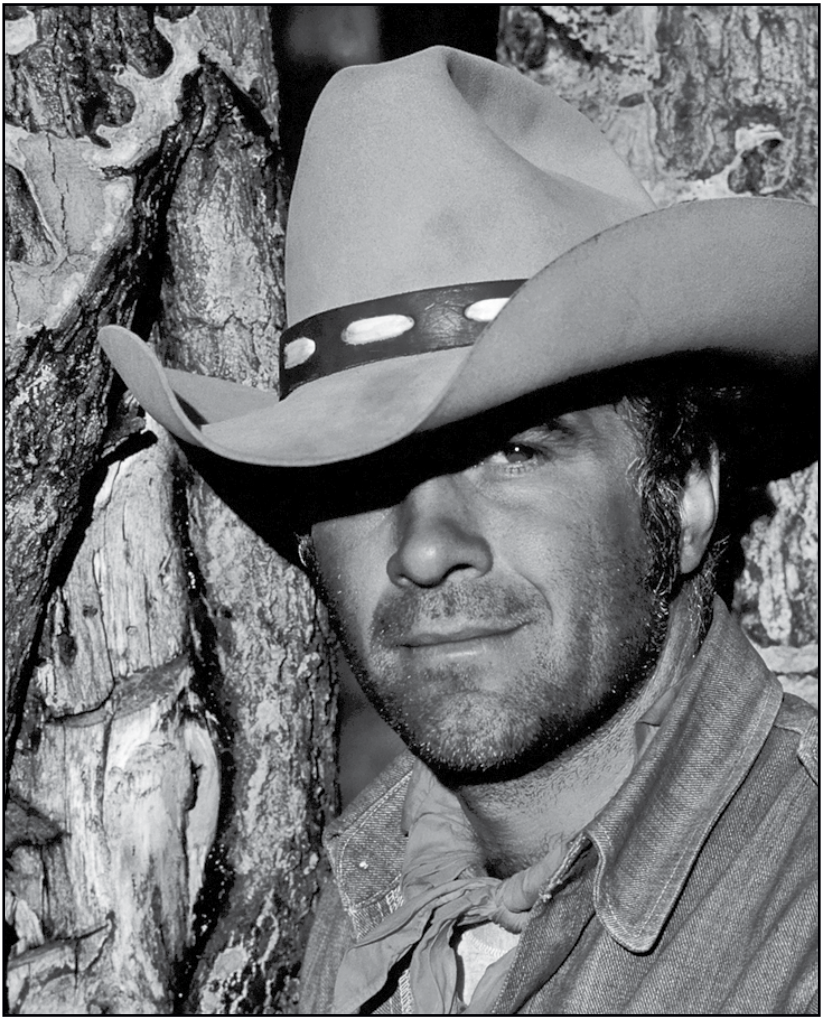
Luther Allison.

Willie Seabery, owner of Poor Monkey's Lounge.

Blues club.

Moment, Gesture, Place

Lesson 22



Self-portrait.

Three Peruvian girls.

Dinner boat, Paris.

Lovers in Paris.

Henry Grey, rancher.

Hands of a cowboy.

Three matadors.

Clarence Brown.

Ed Kashi—Storytelling

Lessons 23–24

Caring, passion, and curiosity are the key elements to great storytelling. You must be genuinely interested in the stories and images you are pursuing; otherwise, you will not have the commitment needed to stay focused and engaged in your work. For many photographers, the overall goal of their work is to tell stories that illuminate the world and raise awareness of issues they care about.

Planning a Story in Pictures

Stories usually start with one idea that piques your interest, such as the desire to learn about another culture. With that idea in mind, do as much research as you can to gain in-depth knowledge about your subject. If you're interested in a culture, find out about its history, politics, religion, literature, art, and more. You might then create a shot list for yourself, derived from conversations with experts and other information gleaned from your research. Some ideas on your list may not pan out, but the list will serve as an ideal to work toward. Be open to serendipitous moments, too, where elements come together that you couldn't plan but that say something about your story. Telling a story in photographs is a combination of thinking in advance about what you need and recognizing and seizing on opportunities.

An all-important image for every story is a sense-of-place picture. What does the environment look like? How can you create a mood and show where the story takes place? You also need images that illustrate the primary aspects of your subject, such as the main issue you're trying to call attention to. To deepen your story, include details and close-ups, as well—perhaps just the hands of your subject. Think of your images as a road map that takes your viewer on a visual journey.

Layering and Lighting

An important aspect of telling stories with photographs is to create layered images. Use the foreground, middle ground, and background of your photographs to tell a story within a story. For example, in a story about a

family being displaced by the construction of a dam, integrate the dam into a portrait of the family. Consider lateral layering, as well, positioning elements across the frame so that the image reads coherently. It's important, too, to pay attention to the edges of your frames; use your peripheral vision. Processing multiple levels of information at once is one of the critical abilities needed by photographers. When you're making photographs, think of yourself as an animal on the hunt, using all your senses to be aware of everything that's going on around you so that you're ready when the right moment strikes.

Another essential element in the language of photography is lighting. Try using reflections from multiple surfaces, such as mirrors or windows, or try working with silhouettes. Imagine forms in the foreground of a photograph that might help tell the story or be visually interesting; set your subject in silhouette against an interesting backdrop. But be aware of the need to balance exposure and capture detail when you do a silhouette. You might also try using shadows to infer something about your story without actually showing it. Sometimes in photography, your goal should be to raise questions without necessarily providing answers.

Advocacy Journalism

Advocacy journalism is a relatively new development in visual storytelling, bringing together the twin commitments to tell stories and effect change. Projects in this field involve a wide range of topics, from the effects of toxic chemicals, to racial profiling, to water shortages and the need for sustainable development. For many photographers, this advocacy work is not about pointing the finger of blame but about raising awareness and support for victims and those in need.

The elements of good photography are as important in advocacy journalism as elsewhere. In considering composition, for example, place your subjects in the frame to enhance the drama and impact of your photographs. Use shadows as a compositional element or smoke to set a mood. Try shooting from different angles to accentuate significant elements that convey your point. Look for unexpected qualities or elements that you can include in a frame, not only to tell the story but also to make your image more dynamic.

In using photography to advocate for groups of people, it's vital to act with sensitivity and humility. You never want to add to your subjects' concerns or problems. These situations can be a test of your ability to interact and communicate well. Think about how you can position yourself to make compelling images while not abusing the good graces of people who are giving you access to intimate situations, and try to work quickly and respectfully. At times, you may become a propagandist for your subjects: They supply you with the images you need to flesh out your narrative, while you bring their concerns or plights to the attention of the wider world.

Visual Journaling

Of course, not everyone is involved in advocacy journalism, but many people enjoy producing personal visual journals of their lives. With the introduction of mobile photography—through smartphone cameras and such applications as Instagram—you can share these journals immediately with family and friends. Smartphone cameras allow you to get close and intimate with your subjects in a way that's not possible with larger-format cameras, and mobile photography applications enable you to combine images to tell your story. Best of all, mobile photography is accessible to all of us. You can use your camera phone to do a form of visual sketching, experimenting with composition and capturing color, shapes, and design anywhere you go.

Assignment

1. Find a subject within one mile of where you live that piques your curiosity. Your subject can relate to people, a place, or a thing. Use your camera to explore, to learn about, and ultimately, to document this subject. Once you've chosen your subject, think first about how you want to establish a sense of place. Then, you may want to include some portraits. Be sure to find telling details that highlight elements of the story you want to draw attention to. Try layering imagery to make your photographs complex. Above all, let your imagination run wild.

All images in Lessons 23 and 24 © Ed Kashi.

Nigerian checkpoint.

Kurdish bride.

Displaced Kurdish family.

Reflections from a mirror shop.

Nigerian villager.

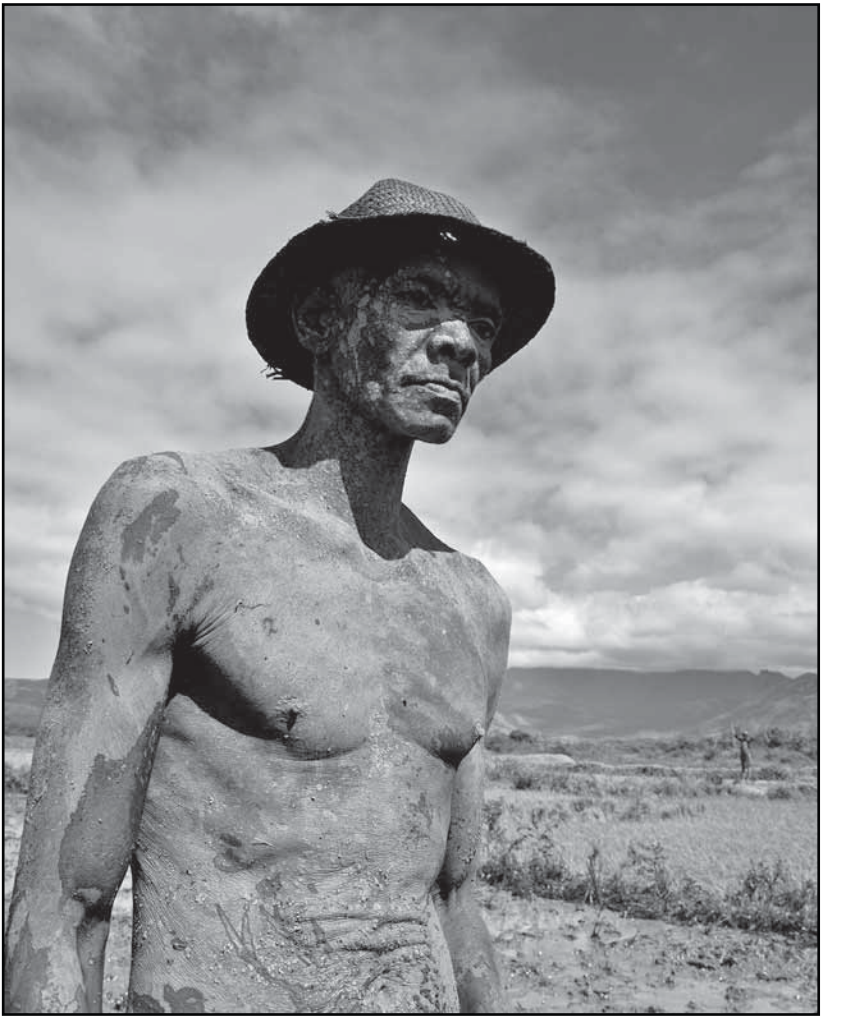
Hands of a Nigerian oil worker.

Baking tapioca over oil flares.

Women's peace march.

Raising Awareness

Lesson 24



Rice farmer, Madagascar.

Victim of racial profiling.

Teenage girls, Madagascar.

Municipal water tap, Madagascar.

Villagers fishing, Madagascar.

Sugarcane worker, Nicaragua.

Leno, sugarcane worker, Nicaragua.

Funeral of sugarcane worker.

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