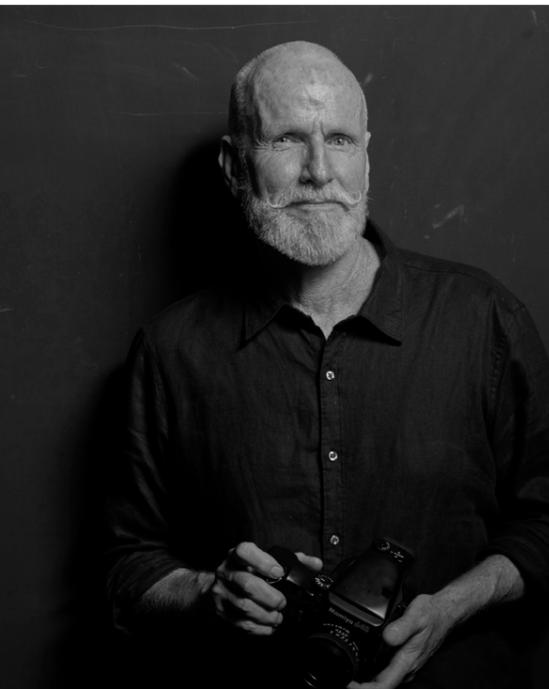




CREATIVE IDEA
to
CREATIVE IMAGE

JOHN BARRETT
WORKSHOPS



John Barrett, Professional Photographer

I've had the absolute pleasure of 45 years as a professional photographer creating fashion and advertising images for global brands and advertising agencies. However, this overview is not to show how experienced and knowledgeable I am about photography although time has taught me a huge amount. It is about the passion of creativity that was with me at the start and still burns bright within me and that capturing amazing images isn't dependent on the cost of your photographic gear or the latest high-tech software.

Why do I do love to create after 45 years?

My photography started with a passion for capturing surfing images as a 15 year old. To fulfil my creativity I walked straight out of high school and into one of the best fashion photography studios in Australia. Since that wonderful start I've been a professional photographer for decades, shooting campaigns for global companies and advertising agencies in both fashion and advertising photography. However, in recent years, my love of creating images personal to me has meant I've focussed more on creating unique images of the human form, often using dancers, acrobats and aerialists.

These incredibly talented human beings became my subjects of choice because I had started to explore the Creative Ideas described in my Artist Statement. This exploration gave me a Creative Direction that caused a flood of Creative Images.



Artist Statement

This statement is the basis for the images I create. I have unlimited scope in Creative Ideas, however, the final Creative Image has to reflect the core of this statement.

'One's True Self'

I spent a large portion of my life thinking that to raise my consciousness and live a rewarding life I had to eradicate any dark thoughts and only live in the light. I thought of this as growing my Self and eradicating my Ego.

I very slowly came to the realization that most of the growth I had achieved came from this inner 'dark' strength and those qualities that are frowned upon to show in polite company. It was only through the balance of dark & light that we realized our goals yet this was unspoken.

Instead, we are now subjected to the superficiality of social media where beauty is measured in the skin deep veneer shown in a selfie, an easy life is achieved without toil and these 'successes' are always beyond the reach of we lesser mortals.

The Japanese speak of three faces.

- The face we show the world.
- The face we show our family & closest friends.
- The face we only show ourselves.

It is this last face that interests me. Though I would replace the word face with Self.

I moved away from the artifice of beauty seen in fashion photography and discovered those wonderful talents that achieve beauty against the odds. It was because of these hidden qualities, their tenacity, ferocity, sensuality and pain both physical & mental that they manifested the grace & beauty we observe. Yet with a fixed smile upon their 'world' face.

The yin & yang of this conflict intrigued me.

How to show the censored darkness and not just the accepted light.

What did this look like?

The more I explored that which was hidden the darker my images became.

My pursuit expands now to all human subjects.

Moving further away from the lightness of being & living for momentary beauty.

My images attempt to capture that which is roiling within – strength, tenacity, ferocity &, sometimes, aggression, anger and pain. To mix it on the palette with those qualities expected and bring forth an image of One's true presentation to the world.

Perhaps, from my perspective, to portray **One's True Self**.

So, how do you go beyond the fundamentals and shoot like an artist?



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The Creative Mind

This is a look inside my creative mind and why I pursue and create the images that are so rewarding.

In following this creative path, I became aware of 2 considerations.

Firstly, I started to define my creative process. What are the key understandings and those simple fundamentals that will give you the creative edge. Not the deep, dark technical study of the camera manual or the next big thing in Photoshop or some new app that does everything for you but those habitual actions that I apply in every shoot.

Secondly, the energy in a good photographic studio must be felt to be believed. I've spent my life passionately taking the spark of a creative idea, building the buzz with my team, and then capturing the best possible Creative Image. However, the majority of current professional photographers in the early part of their careers and the high-end amateurs don't have the opportunity to really experience a professional photographic studio in full swing.

I've created this series of videos and Face to Face Workshops to show you my Creative Process that will take you from understanding the fundamentals of photography through to shooting like an artist.

What I call 'Creative Idea to Creative Image' #CI2CI.

Let's, briefly, discuss my process.

A Brief Overview of the Mastershot Workshop process.

- The Creative Idea
- The Camera
- The lens
- Lighting
- Design & Composition & Posing
- The Creative Image



The Creative Idea

Great photographers must start with a Creative Idea.

They must be able to previsualise what it is they are trying to capture.

Where does this Creative Idea come from?

Obviously experience and practice play a huge part, but the rules are the same whether a lifetime veteran or a diligent amateur.

Luckily, in this digital age we are surrounded by literally millions of images & moments. The goal is to be aware of your chosen subject in this flood of inspiration. Look for those cues. It may be a pose, a location or the way the light hits. Use this to build a library of inspiration to help devise how you can put your unique twist on the end image.

To go beyond the fundamentals, you must understand the fundamentals.

The three fundamentals are:

- Camera
- Lens
- Lighting

The Camera

Yes, you must learn the functions of the camera. Diligently read & understand all that the camera has to offer. However, having done that I come back to the fact that there are 2 functions in the camera that combined with one function in the lens will expose the image correctly and give you an infinite number of variables for your creativity.

- Shutter speed
- Aperture
- ISO

I set my camera to Manual and then decide on those three functions as my most important decisions.

Shutter Speed

- The faster the shutter speed, the shorter the exposure time and the sharper the capture of action in the image.
- The slower the shutter speed, the longer the exposure time and the more motion is evident in the image.

Example



Sharp Image: 1/200th



Time Exposure Image: 1 second with flash freeze

Both are 'Correct Exposures' but the decisions we made created a vastly different creative result.

Aperture

The aperture is the second function that controls the amount of light that reaches the sensor.

It's controlled on the camera but found in the lens.

The aperture also controls the 'depth of field'. This is how much of the image is in sharp focus.

Example



F2.8

F8

F22

We've discussed the 2 mechanical functions for exposure now let's introduce the third.

ISO

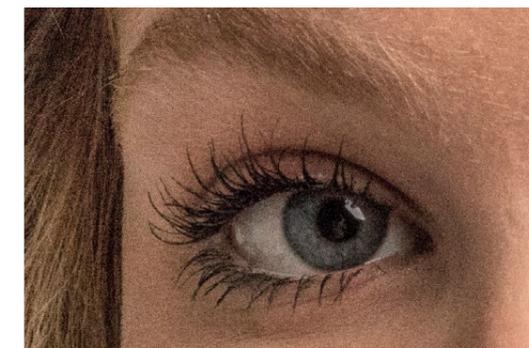
It's when the combination of the aperture & shutter speed will not give the 'correct exposure' that ISO is utilised.

However, higher ISO comes at an expense – it adds to the image what is wrongly referred to as 'grain', from the days of film, but is more accurately described, in this digital age, as noise and decreases the dynamic range.

Example



ISO 100



ISO 3200

The Lens

The importance of the lens in photography is huge!

Lens length falls roughly into 4 categories.

- Fisheye to 35mm is wide angle
- 35 – 70mm is standard
- 70-135mm is medium telephoto
- 135mm-800mm is considered telephoto

The Characteristics of the Lens

Angle of View

This describes how much of any scene is captured with the photographer standing in the same position.

Perspective Distortion

When photographing people the choice of lens length will influence this distortion. It is caused by the position of the lens relative to the subject.

Lens Compression

If the subject stays the same size in the image regardless of the lens used, then 'Lens Compression' is more apparent with the longer lenses. The compression observed is the action of perspective and angle of view changing the ratios with the longer lens.

Depth of Field

That is the area of the image that is in sharp focus.

As a rule of thumb Depth of Field is the range approximately 1/3 in front and 2/3 behind the point of focus in the image that remains sharp dependent upon aperture.

So, what are our 2 selections to define focus?

- Aperture
- Lens selection

You can now see how the choice of aperture and lens can make a huge difference to focus in the final image.

Example



Lens: 200mm Aperture: f1.4

Lens: 35mm Aperture: f16



Light

Next we look at the importance of light to photography.

Light surrounds us yet we only see light when it reflects off a surface. The most beautiful sunset is light reflecting off dust and water droplets in the atmosphere.

We are visual animals. We receive the majority of the information from the world around us through our eyes. It's no wonder that we want to capture those images and that photography has become such an important part of our everyday lives.

I use three rules of light every time I photograph.

Understand these and you can previsualise your creative idea and know the general placement and the effect of light before you even enter the studio.

Rule 1

Light rays travel in a straight path

Rule 2

The larger the light source, in relation to the subject, the softer or broader the light.

Rule 3

The subject receives less light as the light source moves further away.

Understand these 3 rules and you can pick up a camera in any situation and plan how the light will look.

Let's look at examples of different types and tones of light

Soft Light

As the name implies it's a broad light source that will produce a 'soft' lighting effect.



Hard Light

This is a more pinpoint light source and it tends to create a 'hard' lighting effect.



High Key Lighting

High key lighting is intended to lower the lighting ratio in an image.



Low Key Lighting

Low-key lighting brings drama & narrative to an image. It's moody, darker tone focusses the eye on the most important facets of the subject.



High Contrast

A high contrast image has strong blacks and clean whites and a compression of tones in between.

**Low Contrast**

In a Low Contrast image there are no defined black or whites. There is a large range of mid tones making up the image.



George Eastman, one of the founding fathers of photography said;

*“Embrace light, Admire it, Love it.
But above all. Know light!”*

I could not agree with old George more! If you know and understand light you will go beyond the fundamentals and start to shoot like an artist.



Design & Composition

My definition of Design in photography is to identify the graphic elements and colours that are present in an image.

Composition in photography is to take those elements and colours and place them in a balanced and persuasive manner to best tell your visual story. Composition has general rules that lead the viewers eye to a specific point within the image. A secondary benefit of Composition is that a balanced image is more subconsciously appealing.

As for anything applied to creativity in photography these are guidelines. The story you tell with your photography may not be beautiful and balanced. You may want to be jarring and provocative. That is your creative choice.

Examples of composition

The Rule of Thirds

Move your subject to a 1/3 point within the image you balance with the negative space and draws the eye of the viewer to the subject.



Triangles

Triangles work in two ways.



1. To contain the viewers eye within an image.



2. The triangle works as 2 anchor points and one focal point within the image.

Simplicity

Remember the acronym, K.I.S.S., Keep it simple stupid. Well this applies in composition as well.

The Background

Keep attention on the subject by simplifying the background.



Focus

A highly effective method to keep attention on the subject by having the focus on the most important element.



Symmetrical Balance

Symmetry is achieved when there is a centre point or axis within the image where the subject or image is almost a mirror image. The balance is pleasing to the eye, equally balanced on the scale.



Internal Frames

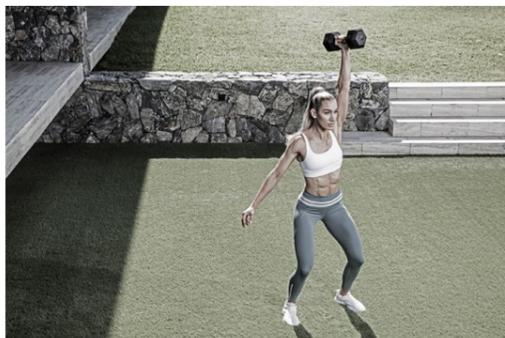
Find natural frames within the image to contain and lead the eye.



Asymmetrical Balance

Asymmetric balance is when you have unequal visual weight within your composition.

Often the stronger or heavier subject migrates towards the centre & is balanced by elements moving away from the centre.



Diagonals

Finally, lines and diagonals are an easy way to draw the attention of the viewer to the subject.

Lead the eye with perspective lines, diagonals and even subject placement and posing.



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Post Production

Capture One

With the correct choices made with camera, lens, lighting, and composition there is now a raw file that is exposed correctly with a tone range that will give me both shadow and highlight detail that I need to create the best possible final image. Always have the raw file, as captured, stored in your archives in case you ever want to go in a different creative direction.

I tether to Capture One when shooting and will adjust the raw file to take me in my creative direction. When I have an image with adjustments made that suit my Creative Idea I process the file to a PSD.



As Captured



After adjustments

Photoshop

Photoshop needs a workshop of it's own! Having said that, like Capture One, I don't need to use every tool available in Photoshop. Only those that will help me create that final Creative Image of which I'm proud.

When learning Photoshop start with the Cloning Tool and Dodge & Burn, if I've captured my image well that is 80% of my retouch. I clone to remove imperfections and dodge and burn to accentuate muscle definition and the shape of the body or to bring out texture in the fabrics.

I especially use the dodge tool to bring out the texture in the hair. Opening the tone range and increasing the highlights to show the flow.



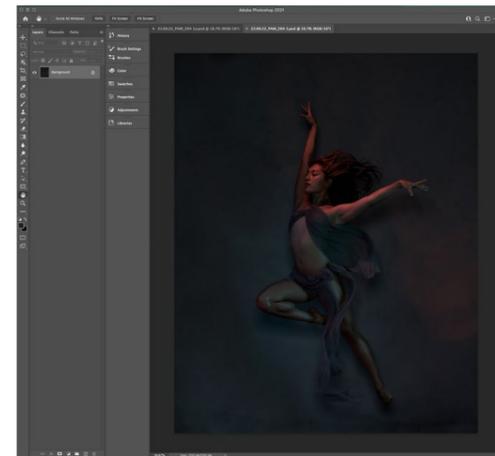
Unretouched



After clone and dodge & burn

I do love the liquify tool to really accentuate the hair and fabric. I can also use this to round a muscle or stretch a limb but so subtly. My best judge is the subject, if they can't tell me where I've enhanced them then I've done it well.

I always strive for a subtle enhancement never to radically change the original image.



Unretouched



After Liquify

As my image is enhanced it may move away from where I'd like it to be with look and feel so it might be necessary to readjust the other tools like contrast, brightness, saturation, colour balance, texture, curves or any that suit to bring it back to my Creative Idea and ultimately the finished Creative Image.

The Creative Image

After that final save you sit back and look at that Creative Image that is the culmination of all the ingredients in our photographic recipe. It is a wonderful feeling.

We now have all the understanding we need to experience the excitement of creating that perfect image.

The joy is that the more you explore and experience the creative process the more adventurous you can become.

The rules are learnt, the process is understood & the imagination is fired up. You've made the journey from Creative Idea to Creative Image, and you can't wait to show the world!

Even better, tomorrow you can start on another unique creative idea and the buzz is back.

I've been creating images passionately for 45 years now. I can review an exciting, rewarding portfolio of beautiful images and know, incredibly, I have only just scratched the surface and the creation of new images stretch indefinitely into the future.

Welcome to the never-ending creative adventure!



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