



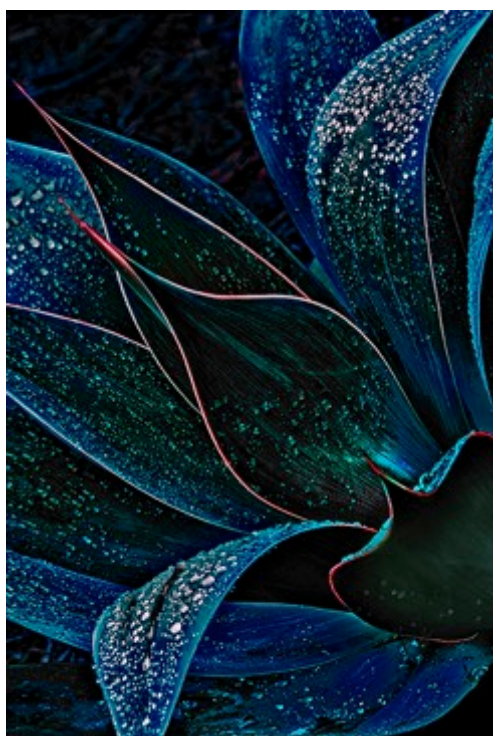
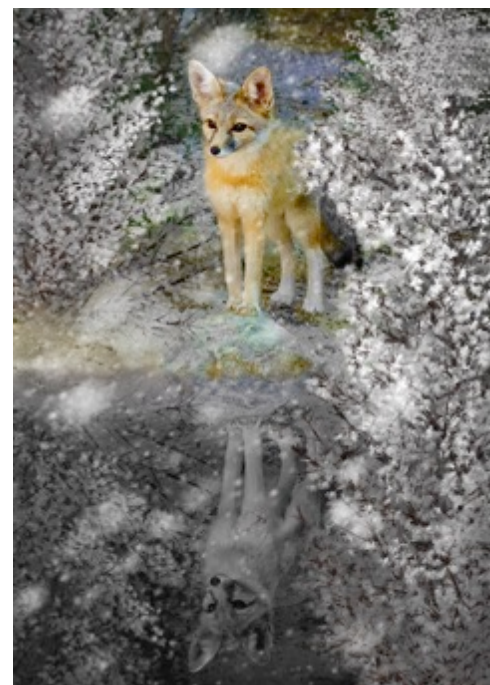
Poly Speaks

Edited by Jim Mildice

**Poly Photo
Camera Club**
San Diego, California

Volume 7, No.5

June, 2016



Best of Nature – 2016 (page 4)

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From the Editor

This month, we've chosen to talk about the "*Best of Nature*" exhibition while it is still at the Ordovery Gallery in the Natural History Museum in Balboa Park. It is an exhibition with a different approach to seeing nature, unlike the images we see in our clubs and in the nature divisions of the Photography Exhibit at the San Diego County Fair.

Our article talks about some of those differences and shows a few examples of the kinds of images that succeed and are hung in the "*Best of Nature*." Perhaps because my view of nature images often coincides with his, I believe there is real merit in Abe Ordovery's approach.

Finally, if you have not seen this exhibition yet, go to the Museum to see it before it ends on August 21; so you can experience an elegantly-designed Exhibition of Photography in a first class venue.

And by-the-way, go there on a first Tuesday of the month (free for residents) or you will have to pay the regular admission to get into the museum.

Last month, I touched on how digital photography and post-processing software have finally put us on a par with the older, classical arts, such as painting and sculpture.

Critics could always say that a painter's interpretation and subjective view was inherent in the work because he/she individually shaped every picture element, placed them, chose what color and texture they were, and decided how they related to one-another.

"Fine Art" photographs have long been shackled to reality – and we could just control subject selection, lighting, framing, juxtaposition, point-of-view, color balance, etc. to express what we wanted to communicate. In fact, most of us still seem to believe in those approaches.

Even today, most of what we read about photographic "Art" has been written as if Photoshop does not exist. Even so, almost everyone now allows that it's OK to use post-processing to adjust contrast and brightness and color balance and cropping, and even clean-up dust and other small imperfections, but not much

more. You know, essentially the same things we once did in our darkrooms.

In fact, practitioners of many photographic disciplines still say that it's improper and/or somehow cheating to add or remove any image elements, (or in extreme cases of rule-making) "change any pixels."

Except for Scott Kelby and his associates and instructors, photographic art teachers and authors focus almost exclusively on the process of "taking the picture." In the extreme, we are made to feel that making any significant changes to the image after the exposure is disreputable if we are trying to produce "fine art."

To get to the point, I am proposing that we should expand our concepts and abilities to produce evocative artistic images, by adding post-processing to the process. We should include whatever level is appropriate to better communicate ideas and/or feelings to the viewer.

That gives us the same power that painters have. I am not suggesting that we produce images that look like paintings. In fact, I am opposed to plug-ins and filters that add "painterly" effects that make our pictures look like paintings. Our art form is different, and I believe photographs should look like photographs. But if we can now also control color, positioning, perspective, emphasis, additions and subtractions, lighting effects, and most of the other options, why not do it!

Of course that means we have to learn some new approaches. To be really successful, we need to conceptualize what we want the final image to be, and the post-processing we want to apply; starting simple color changes, or to make changes in the color or direction of the light, all the way to using multiple images to be later combined.

And finally – remember this is not an excuse for not taking a good picture to start with. We still need to apply all the selectivity and artistic skills we have been studying about and learning.

So go out and try it. Before you press the shutter, visualize the changes you can make in post-processing that that you can use to make it better or enhance what you want to say.

Musings from the President

I'd like to begin by thanking those who returned completed questionnaires to me – either in person or through email. I received thirty in total. If you didn't get around to filling one out, please do so. I'd like to hear from all members. Generally, members are satisfied with the way the club is run. Two of the questions received some very good comments that I'd like to see us pursue. One of them had to do with new members.

Some would like to see new members introduced in a more lengthy fashion at our competition meetings – maybe through a short question & answer period. So, beginning with our June competition meeting, we'll try it. I would then encourage “old-timers” to take a little time to chat with the “newbies” to make them feel even more welcome. Another suggestion was for new members to be interviewed and introduced in Poly Speaks along with a picture of him/her. I'll discuss

this possibility with our newsletter editor, Jim Mildice.

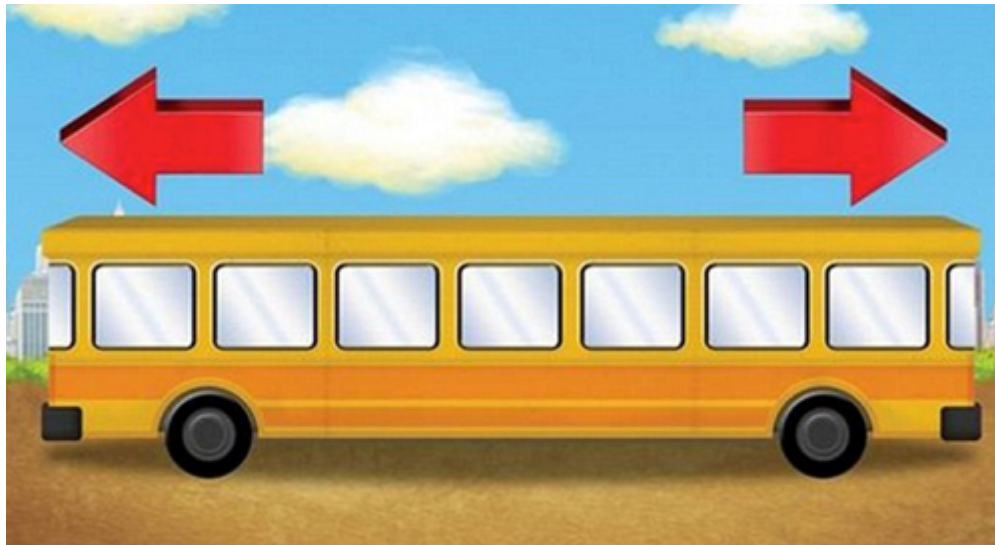
Another idea was to assign a mentor. We did establish a mentor program a couple of years ago, but unfortunately it needed more structure and we didn't keep up with it. Perhaps one of you would be willing to organize this program.

The next issue that received many various comments and suggestions had to do with competition and judges. No surprise there since it's an ongoing topic and may never be resolved to the satisfaction of everyone, but we'll give it a try. I'll be putting together a committee to look into some of the issues and possible solutions that were put forth. If you'd be interested in being part of this committee, please contact me. darleneelwin@cox.net
Until next month,

Happy Shooting!
Dee

Which way is the bus going (Part 2)?

Last month we asked you to tell us which way the bus was going. Only one of you (Beverly) seemed to know that the bus was going to the left. (But we disqualified her because she was a bus driver in an earlier stage of her life.) The question this month is how could she tell it was going to the left?



Best of Nature – 2016

It seems that most of Poly's members don't know very much about the "*Best of Nature*" Exhibition. Since it is currently on display in the Ordovery Gallery on the fourth floor of the Natural History Museum (and I have a special attachment for it), I thought it was a good time to talk about it, and encourage you to go and see it.

First, because of its curator/organizer, reputation, selectivity, and venue, the Ordovery Gallery is one of the most prestigious photo exhibitors in Southern California. The Best of Nature hangs 70 to 75 matted and framed prints that are selected from between 1200 and 1300 entries, using a two-stage, juried process. All the accepted images are for sale at prices appropriate to the venue.

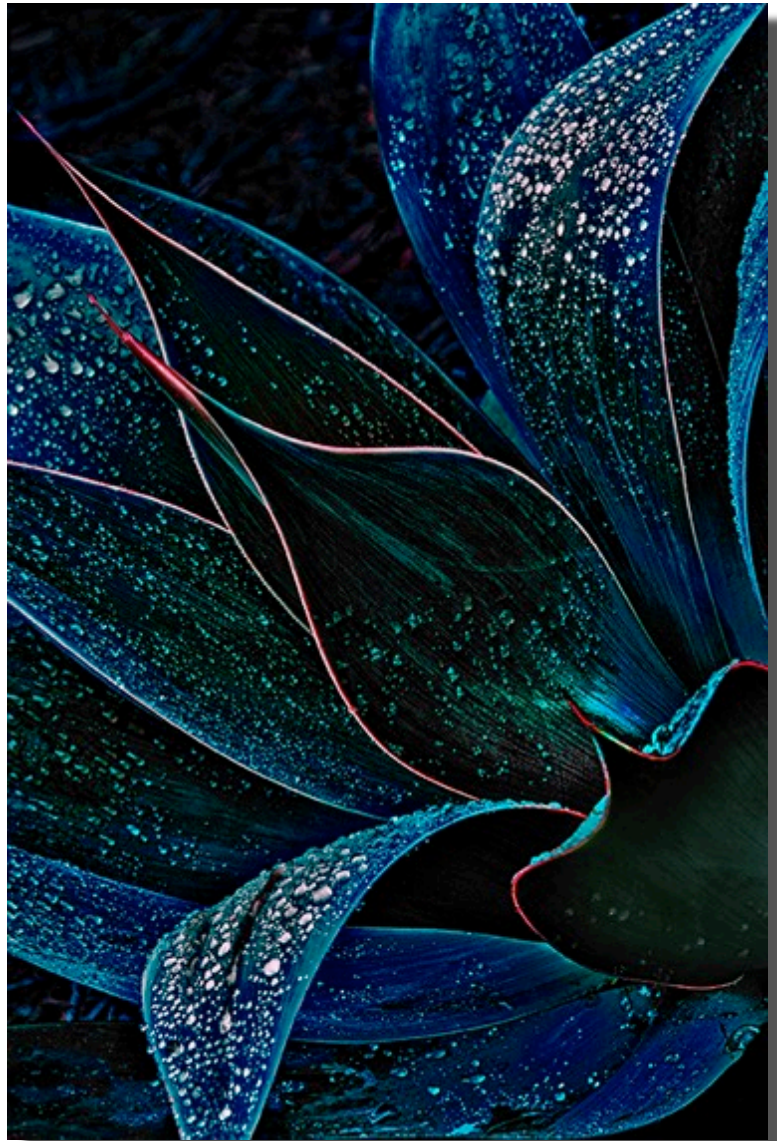
Unlike many "nature" exhibitions and competitions that have hard limits on subjects and post-processing, there are no limits on image subjects or elements or how the images are produced as long as they depict nature realistically. The photographer can take full advantage of all the modern hardware and software advancements that are available to him/her. The published entry instructions actually say:

"Amateur and professional photographers are invited to submit nature photography to the Best of Nature Photography Show. Landscape, wildlife, flora, and nature-based abstract / impressionistic images will be considered. Traditional, digital, and alternative-process photographic works will be reviewed. The judges are looking for images of nature without people or major indications of their presence."

"Note: If subject matter was removed, significantly altered, or removed from your image, or other major changes, other than standard color, contrast, or brightness adjustments in Photoshop or other editing software, please indicate what you did in your submission email."

In addition to the written rules, my observations have been that the judges put a premium on creativity and a sense of place. (Close-up portraits of Zoo animals don't make it, no matter how technically excellent they are.) Also a majority of the pictures are those that people will like and want to hang on their wall. (After all, the Gallery wants to sell your images.)

To show what I mean, here are a few examples of accepted 2016 images from Poly members.



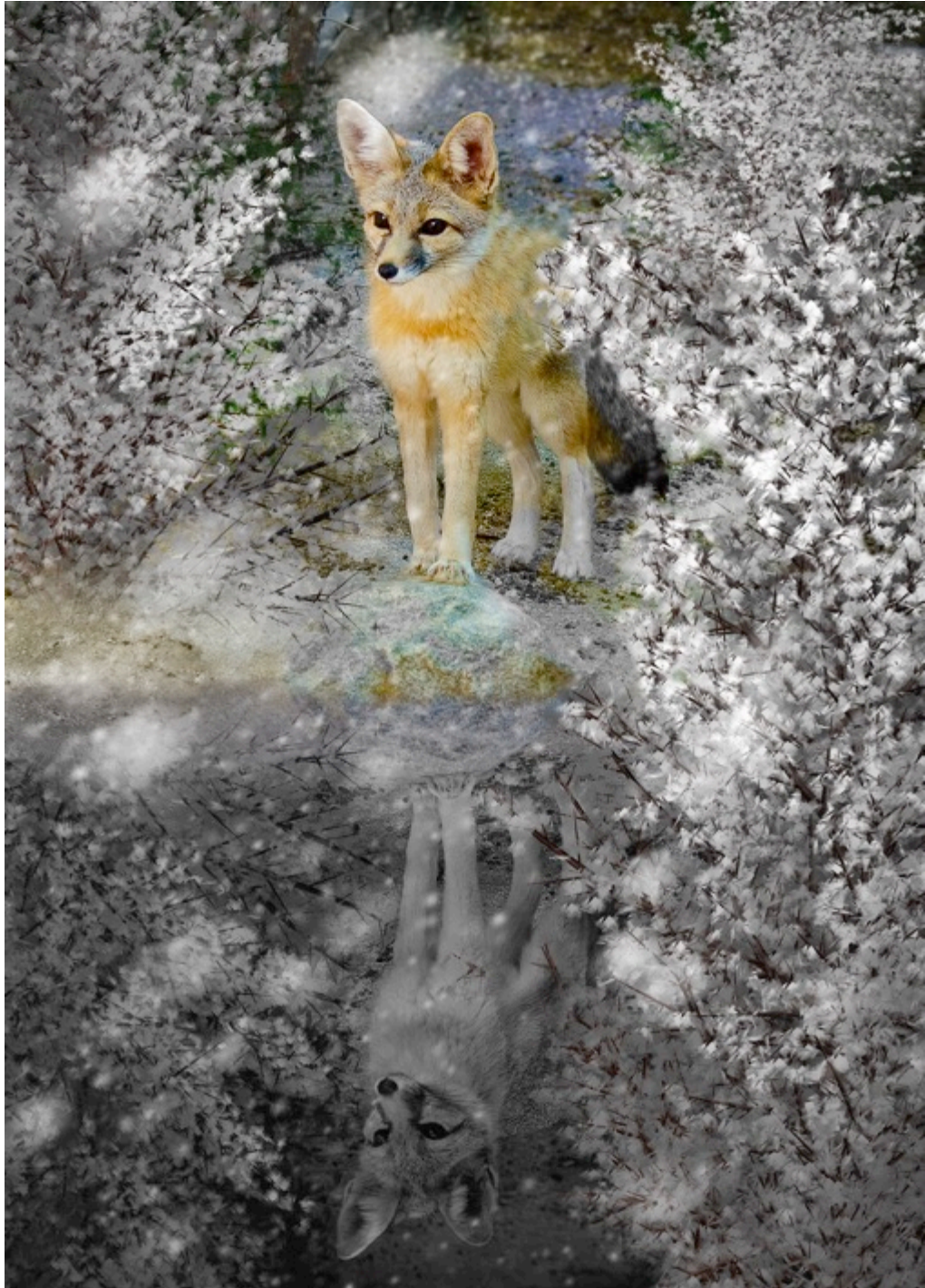
"Dewdrops transformed" – by Dorothy Mildice (Honorable Mention)



Splash on the Rocks – by Joan Harris

“Storms Come and Go, I Survive” – by Dorothy Mildice





“First Snow” – by Jim Mildice (Third Place)

This and That

By Clark Winsor

At last months competition, I noticed that there were a lot of images sized wrong. To go over the sizing for a competition image, the height should be 1080 pixels and the width should be 1920 pixels. If you have done some cropping or your image is vertical, then set the height to 1080 and let the width default. This is important, as it does make a difference when projected at the PAB.

Our judge in June is Steve Cirone. He is one of SCACC'S best judges. Steve is considered one of the best bird photographers around, and rightly so. I have heard it said many times that Steve is such a great bird photographer that it is better that we not enter any bird images if he is the judge. Almost everyone I know follows that advice. In thinking about it, I'm not so sure that is the best advice. Another school of thought is to enter your best bird image and listen to what Steve's comments are. It just may make you a better bird Photographer.

When it came time for a new camera I chose a Nikon D600. That's the camera that after its release it got all the bad press about dirty sensor problems. The sensor issues were a real problem for Nikon and they tried to correct their problems by coming out with a new release, the Nikon D610. I don't believe that convinced many buyers to buy that model either. I guess I was lucky, as I have never had any sensor issues. My D600 is the finest camera I have ever owned.

However, I did have a strange issue last month. My image quality settings changed from RAW + JPEG FINE to JPEG FINE. I didn't open up the menu settings. I just finished a series of images with the RAW settings, set the camera down, and when I picked it up the menu settings had changed to JPEG FINE.

If anyone has any ideas on just what might have happened, please give me a call.

Talk to you next month.

Quote of the Month

"The kinds of pictures I want to take are the ones I don't know how to make. And I don't know what they're going to look like yet, but I don't want to keep on taking the pictures that I already took. I'm proud of them, I like them, but I don't feel like I need to do more of them. I feel like moving in a different direction."

— *Gregory Heisler*

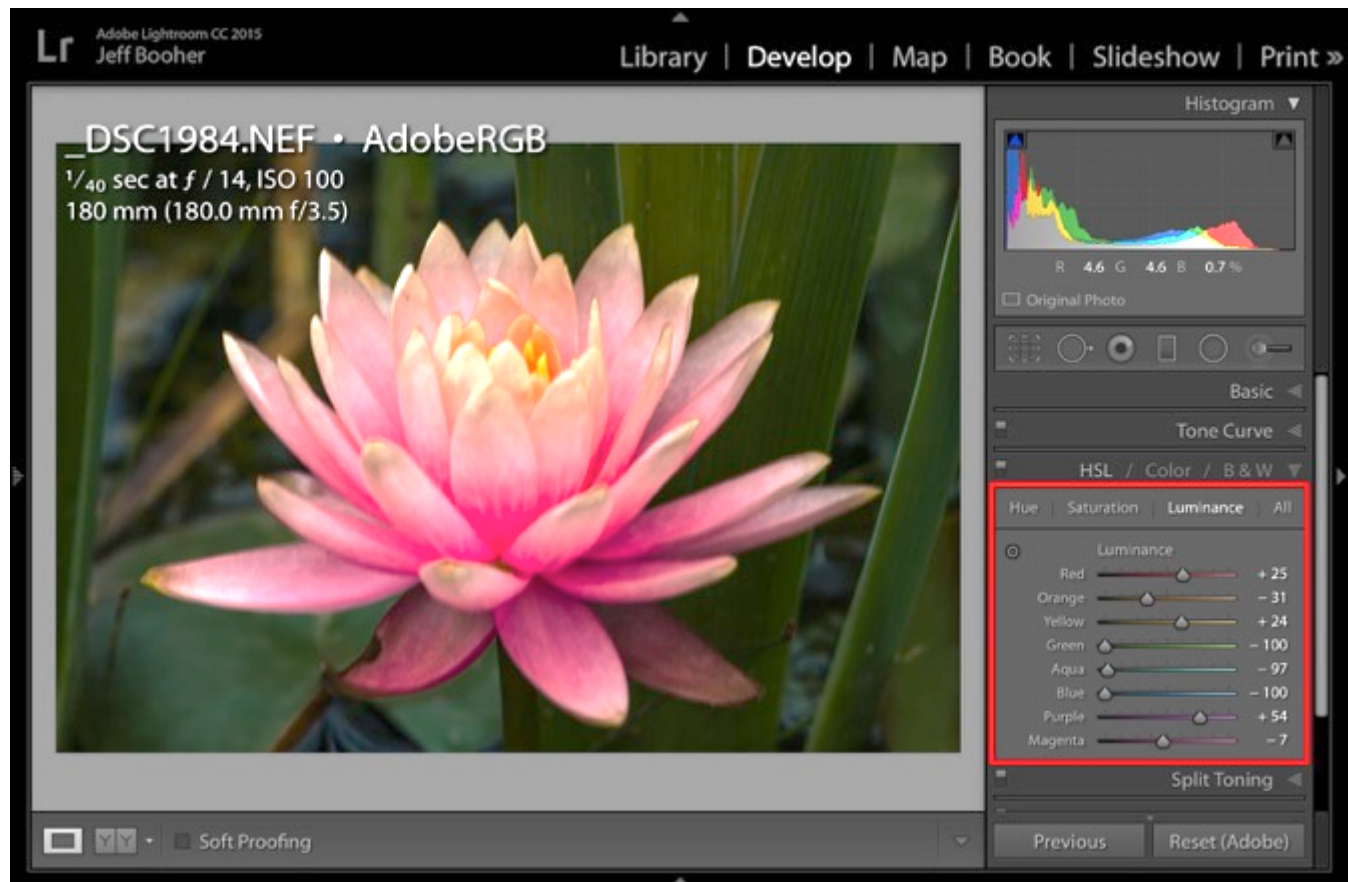
The Photoshop Insider

By Jeff Booher

This month I wanted to talk a little about luminance.

Controlling luminance is a powerful way to control tones in your images and there are many ways to control luminance.

The easiest and most obvious way to adjust the luminance is to use the Luminance panel in ACR or Lightroom:



Pro Tip: Use the Saturation Panel in ACR or Lightroom to adjust the saturation of the Purple hue. Adding a HUE/Saturation adjustment layer in Photoshop doesn't give you a purple option so here's your chance...

If you've known Stephen Burns long enough then you've probably heard him talk about his "Value System" about eight or nine hundred times. This method for managing tonality in your images can yield some very dramatic results. It's a simple process of creating a composite monochrome layer and setting the layer blend mode to Luminosity.

In the next Section, I'll demonstrate how to assemble this system using one of my images.

Base Layer: HDR merged image set.

This was a combination of 3 images that I merged in Photomatix but the processing is not “Over The Top” so it doesn’t have that HDR over-processed look.



Monochrome converted image layer.

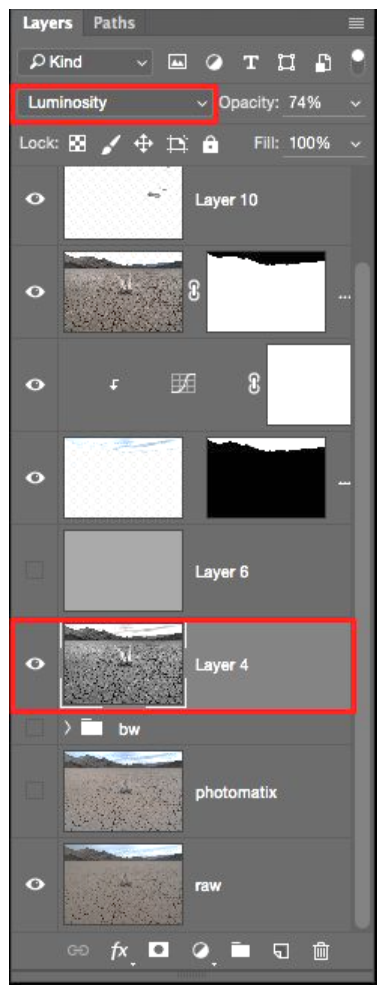
This was 3 layers to convert the image to black and white, give texture to the ground and highlight the rock trails then put all 3 layers into a layer group.



Working image.

Once all 3 Monochrome images were stacked in a group, I could set the layer group’s blend mode to “Luminosity” to get this effect.





Here I merged the my monochrome layer group into a composite layer and hid the layer group--changing the composite layer's blend mode to "Luminosity".

This allowed me to paint in adjustments directly on the luminosity layer where I needed to and not have to worry about subtracting from one layer and adding to another because I had varying masks.

The remaining layers are just fixing the sky because the HDR effect left a bit of a halo around the mountain ridge so I had to fix that along with a few other things like sensor spots.

This is one of the more sophisticated examples of this technique that I have--primarily because I worked on it with Stephen.

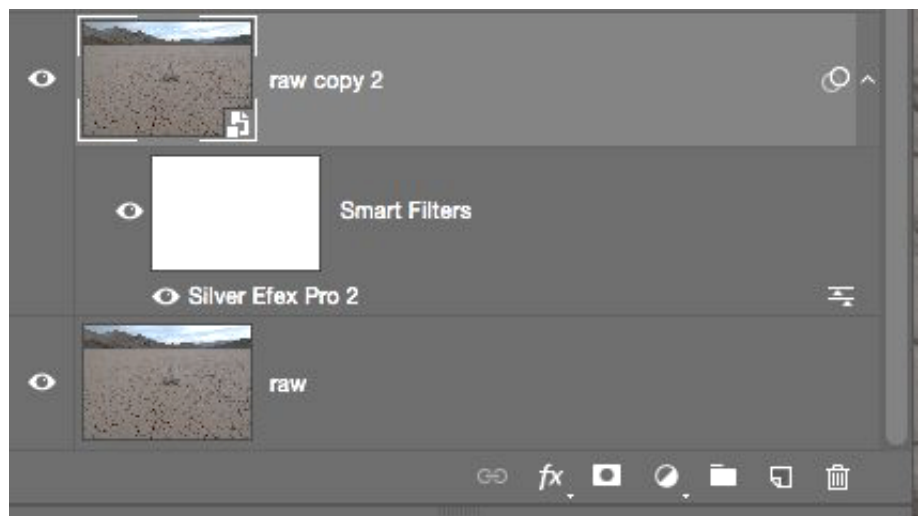
If you are new to Photoshop or just lazy, there are much easier ways to get similar results but, in the end, you're probably going to need to understand a little about how masking works and be able to control layer masks. But not always.

The absolute easiest way to achieve this is to add a Black and White adjustment layer and set its blend mode to "Luminosity". You won't be able to get the rich tones and textures like I did using just a single adjustment layer. The textures were brought out in a layer that was masked off and had its blend mode set to "Overlay" and you just can't get the depth in the shadows using a simple adjustment layer. I was able to get pretty close with another Black and White adjustment layer set to "Overlay" and a duplicate of the raw layer set to "Overlay". Oh--also I had to use a curves adjustment layer to bring up the shadows. Not so simple in the end I guess...

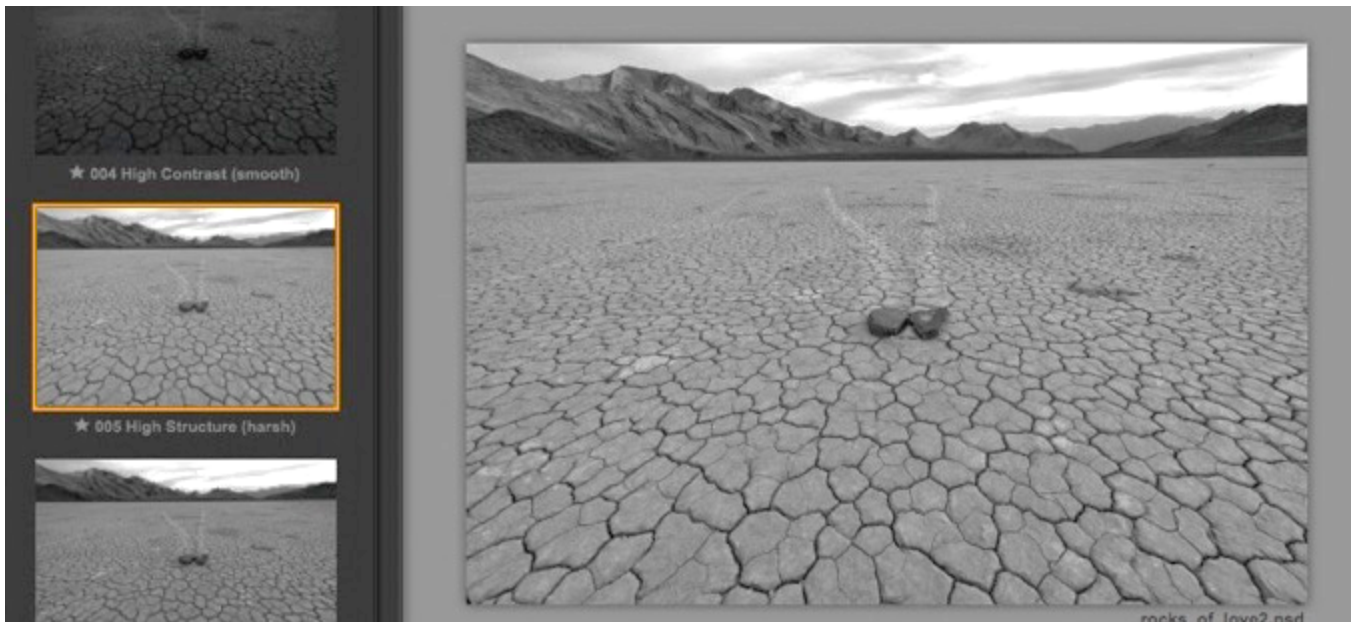
There's actually a much easier way to do it but it requires Nik Silver Efex Pro 2. Actually it probably works with Silver Efex Pro but, since Nik is now free, you might as well upgrade.

The cool thing about Silver Efex Pro is that it lets you control about a million things in the image from lights to darks and you can choose one of the presets as a starting point a.

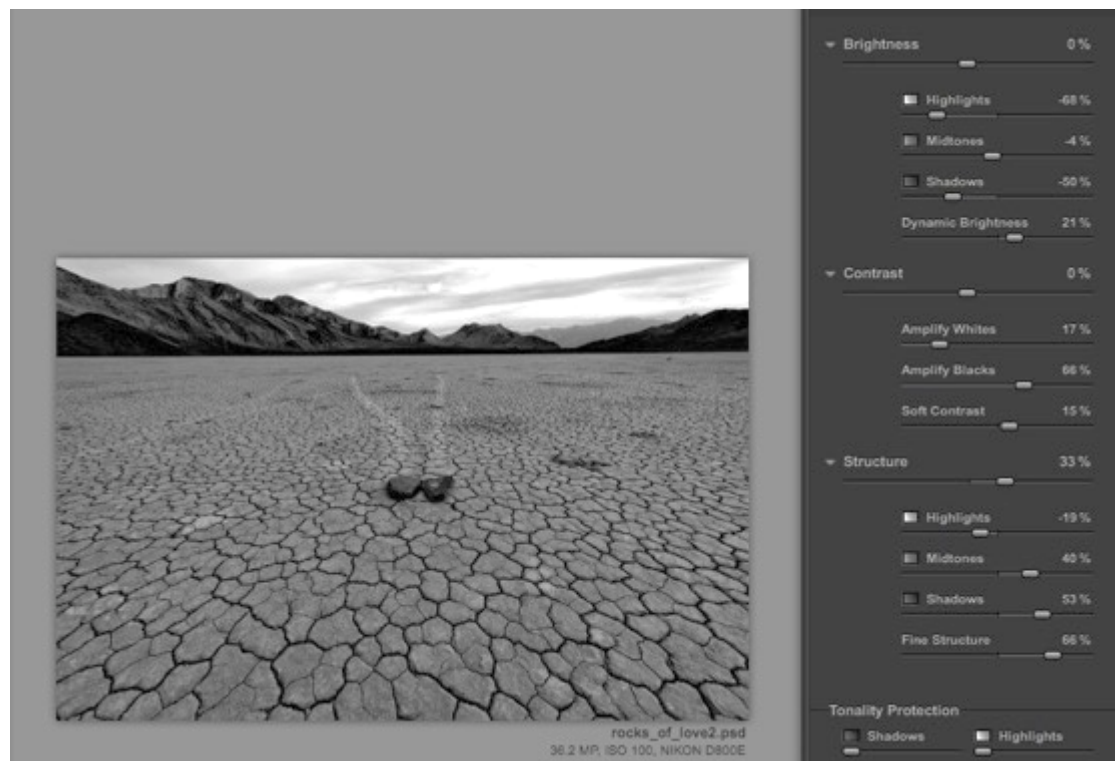
The first step is the create a composite layer and convert it to a smart object. This will allow Silver Efex Pro to work as a Smart Filter which we can later go back to and edit if we need to adjust the luminance values. Next, with the smart object layer selected, select "Silver Efex Pro" from the Nik > Filters menu in Photoshop.



Once inside of Silver Efex Pro, I'm going to look at some of the presets as a starting point to see which one gives me a good base to start with. My goal is to bring out the textures and tones of the image so I'm probably going to look for a high-contrast or high-structure filter as a starting point.

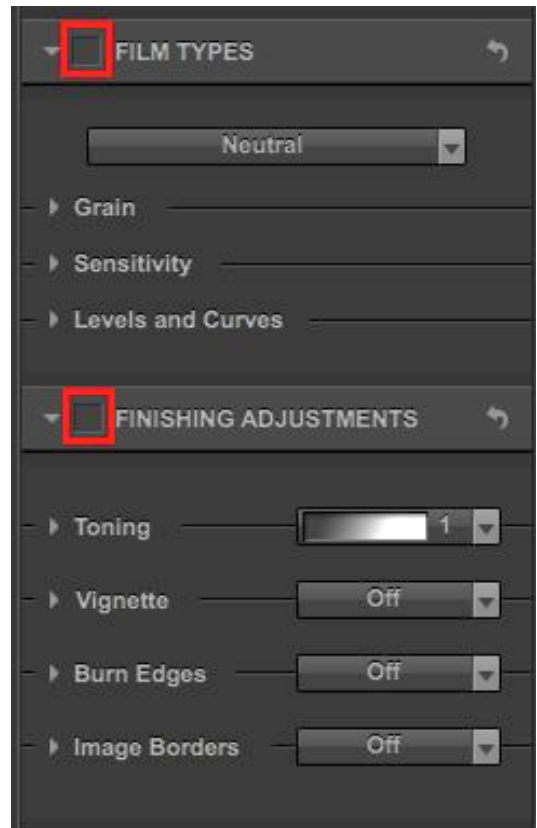


Next I'm going to push the process even further in the global adjustments panel and, because I really want to bring out the textures and tones, I'm going to focus on the Structure and Contrast.



One thing to note, though, is that I'm leaving the brightness slider alone and pulling the Tonality protection off of both shadows and highlights. That's because *I want to affect tonality*. The whole point of this process is to control tonality. Or is it tonalities? Anyway, this is very important as well--turn off Finishing Adjustments and Film Types. The grain effect from old film stock is fun for certain images but it just ends up looking like noise in this application and you don't want that. Just uncheck the boxes to the left and those features will be disabled. That also means that things like the levels and curves and film type sensitivity features are also disabled.

That's fine. We don't need those features.



What we will need is some exposure control for the darkest shadows in the background and, for that, I'm going to have to use some control points.

I also added some control points to darken the back of the Racetrack floor and brighten the rocks a bit. Some of the control points are linked together so that I could control them with a single slider but then I ended up just alt-dragging a bunch and decided that it would be better to show where they are, so this is a grab before those in the background were linked. It's always best to link when you can so that you can control brightness with one slider and not have to control, in this case, 26 sliders.



Once I have all of the control points set, I'm done with the conversion to black and white so I can save the image and get back into Photoshop to finish. Once inside Photoshop, change the layer blend mode of the Smart Object to "Luminosity" and voila!

Here's the final image with the sky adjustments and other fixes. This is a comparable version to what was submitted for competition and I almost like this version better. Almost.



This was the version submitted for competition (before cropping) that Stephen and I worked on.

SCACC News – June, 2016

By Mary Anderson

SCACC has a new club! Photo Artists Camera Club (PACC) was voted in by the board during May 3rd meeting. Mike Packard is the president and the club is geared more towards beginning photographers and less on competition. It is hoped that once beginners are no longer “beginners” they will consider joining other clubs in SCACC. They are welcome to stay in PACC if they choose. Welcome PACC to SCACC!

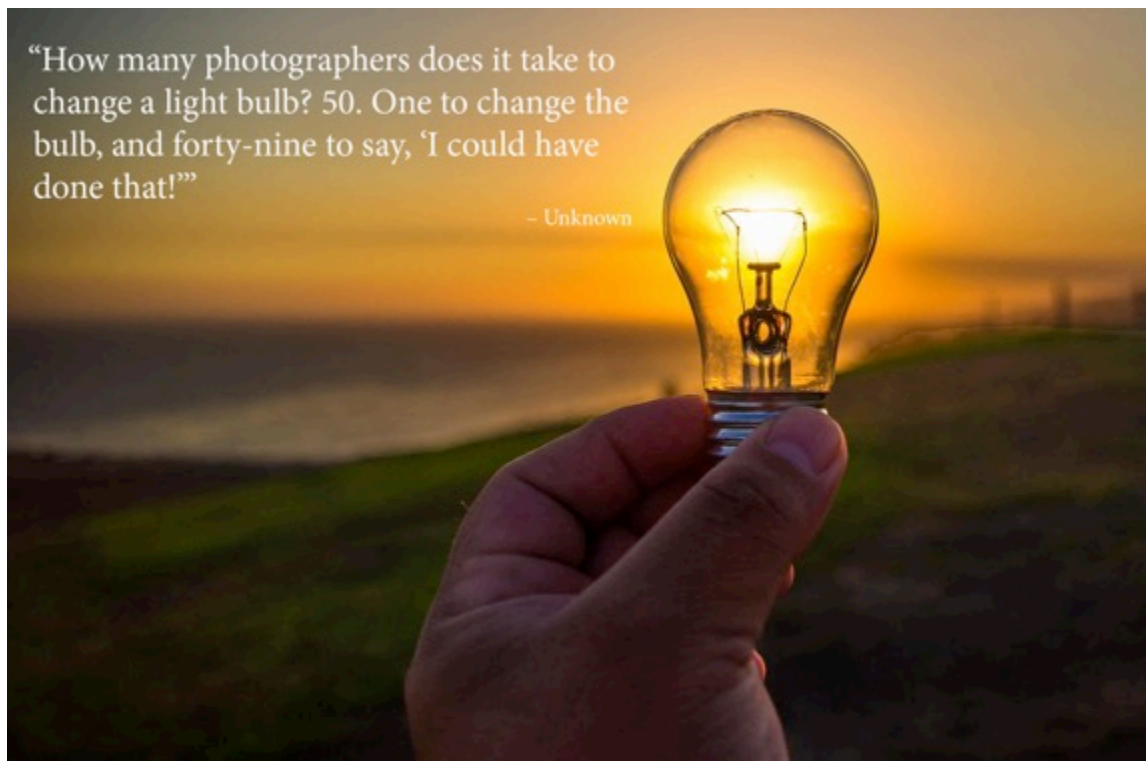
SCACC's new VP of Building, Dave Poplawski from Darkroomers, has put together the protocol for cleaning the building. It is nicely laminated and hanging in the hallway with hosting schedules. Darkroomers did a wonderful job of cleaning in May. They set a high bar! Let's see if Poly can top them! A little competition is a good thing!

FYI, we are told that PAB will be on the Balboa Park Wi-Fi by the end of June. The folks planning the Wi-Fi had no idea the PAB existed until Les Anderson (SCACC president) stepped in, met with them, and made them very aware of our presence. We are now on the map!

Important upcoming dates:

Next Interclub competition is **Tuesday July 19**. Interclub consists of four SCACC clubs (Poly, Photo Nats, Darkroomers, and Fallbrook), which compete bi-monthly. Competition viewing is open to all and starts at 7:30pm at PAB.

The next SCACC meeting is **Tuesday July 5** at 7:00pm and everyone is welcome to attend. Lots of good things happening these days!



Programs and Coming Events

Sue Cerise & Barbara Fletcher

June 4 - Competition

June's Project Theme is "City Abstract"

Our judge for this month will be **Steve Cirone**.

Steve has judged for us many times. His work has been published in numerous magazines; and he is also a great teacher who offers workshops and tours throughout the greater San Diego area.

Steve is a world-class avian photographer and an award winning nature photographer. He has a long history of associations with photographic activities and many photo groups in San Diego. He has been a driving force for Poly and the Photo Naturalists in the early days of the transitions to serious digital photography. He also led the reorganization and recovery of the Photo section (which was on life-support) of our local chapter of the Sierra Club.

Steve has also dabbled in commercial photography along the way, shooting surf contests, weddings, rock concerts, graduation ceremonies and the like.

After all that, he hasn't lost his sense of

humor. He's one of our best judges and really fun to listen to, when he's evaluating pictures.

Steve and some his work can be seen at www.stevecirone.com

June 18 – Image Review, Evaluation and Discussion Workshop – PAB With Dan Palermo

Dan is an experienced judge and one of Poly's best and most creative photographers. He will lead conversations about images and judging from attending members. There will be an emphasis on creativity and artistic expression and the image elements that both add to and subtract from the picture's message.

Attendees are invited to email a few images to Bill G-A at billga@cox.net before the meeting to get some friendly feedback and discussion beyond the few words our competition judges give us in the short time they have available.