

# Creative Point of View

Photoshop from the creative to the practical

■ BY KATRIN EISMANN

## What Do You Mean?

People create to express, explore, escape, and experience the world within themselves and around them. Imagining the final image before you press the shutter release will increase your ratio of successful images.

**B**lack-and-white photography and printing are experiencing a true Renaissance that continues to gain momentum as the image and digital-print quality keeps improving. Creating a delicate black-and-white image from a digital camera file offers us many more and better options than when we were working with black-and-white film, color contrast filters, and developer and fixer baths. As digital black-and-white image making is made easier with inkjet printers that truly produce a neutral black-and-white print (or in Advanced Mode, a subtly toned image), interest in the masters of black-and-white photography is also increasing. Exhibits of Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, and Paul Strand are well visited, and original prints are selling for large sums of money. More importantly, photographers are looking to these masters to learn how they created and crafted their images.

### Intent in the mind's eye

Intent and purpose separate the hit-or-miss shooter from the dedicated amateur and professional artist. Before mounting camera on tripod and even before pressing the shutter release, the aforementioned photographic masters knew exactly what they wanted the final print to look like. The concept of previsualization is the foundation of the Zone System—where the photographer would see the final print while they studied the landscape. They would then determine the proper exposure and film-processing time, temperature, and chemistry to best create a negative that would print consistently and express the scene they saw in their mind's eye.

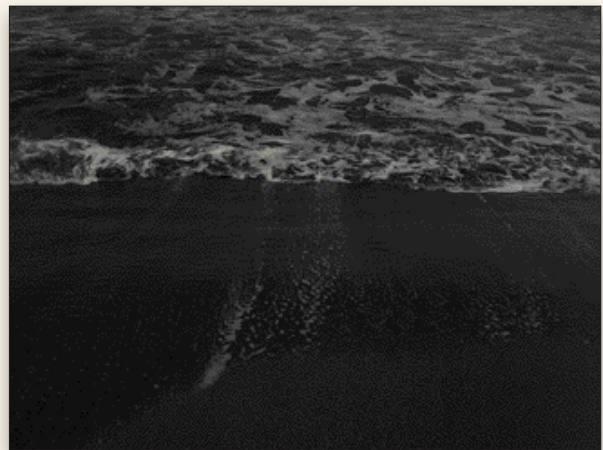
These masters used every possible camera tool and darkroom technique to create the intended image: working with filters to enhance contrast; exposing for specific tonal zones; adjusting development times; and drastically dodging, burning, bleaching, and toning prints. If the artist's intent was served with manipulation and enhancement, the image was successful. Rather than simply recording the landscape, still life, or portrait, they worked long and hard to best express their vision with whatever means necessary.

### Intent and commitment

Recently my husband and I discovered the Big Island in Hawaii. Long before we packed our bags to escape the cold

New York winter, we agreed not to photograph the standard postcard views of Hawaii; rather, we were more interested in the diverse culture that froths with historical, natural, religious, and social energy. We enjoy working long and hard to discover and define the scenes that express our impressions. Our dogged intent and focus kept us going through some of the worst rains that the Islands have experienced in more than 50 years.

I took this original exposure on Waipio Beach—a 2-mile-long beach that borders Waipio Valley, a mystical and powerful place where Hawaiian royalty would meet to make important decisions.

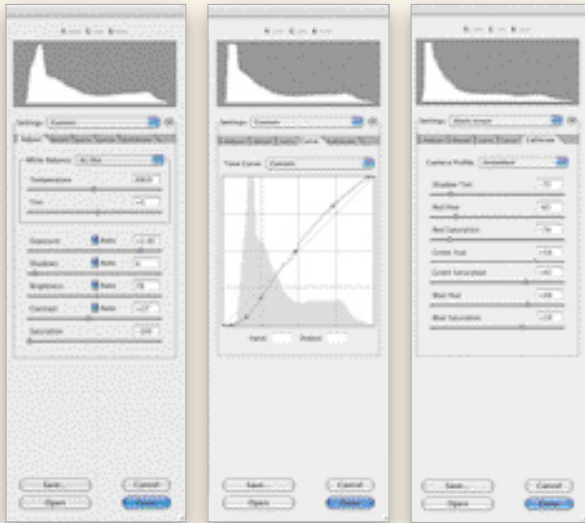


*Original exposure*

My intent with this photograph was to render the blackness and converging power of the water and land, which I saw in my mind's eye. As I walked the beach, I visualized the final image, so I underexposed the image to make the beach as black as possible.

In Adobe Camera Raw, I further expressed this intent by reducing the image saturation, adjusting the contrast, and refining the black-and-white conversion with the calibrate sliders to best express my original intent.

When the image is carefully composed, focused, and exposed, it rarely requires a lot of digital darkroom work to be



Camera Raw adjustments



After adjustments

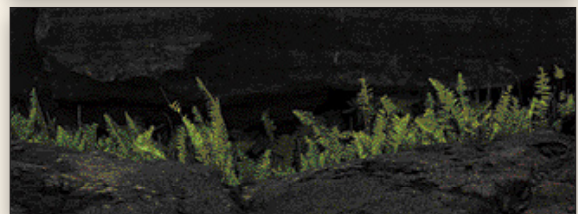
successful. Personally, I rarely show people images on the camera LCD screen or the unprocessed RAW files—those recordings are simply one step toward fulfilling my final intent.

Our journey into stronger and stronger rainstorms didn't prevent us from taking pictures. And we appreciated that the



rains kept most of the tourists away—except for the well-wrapped ones gazing into the vastness of Halema'uma'u Volcano. I photographed them as the wind punished their impromptu rain ponchos into a delicate plastic skin.

We were intrigued by how nature interacted and often collided with human structures—from the abandoned Officers' Club near Diamond Head, to the lava flow which moved across the highway impervious to human desires to take the most direct route, and finally to the tiny ferns which grew through the starkest landscape to regenerate the island with delicate growth.



Artists have been manipulating, enhancing, and creating images for much longer than Photoshop has been in existence. Photography has never been more compelling than it is right now. Digital tools and techniques allow us to better express ourselves with greater clarity. Focus on your intent and your images will be successful. ■

*Katrin Eismann* ([www.katrineismann.com](http://www.katrineismann.com)), author of *Photoshop Restoration & Retouching* and *Photoshop Masking & Compositing*, is an internationally recognized artist, author, and educator. She has been inducted into the *Photoshop Hall of Fame* and was recently invited to participate in the *Adobe Learning Resources* advisory board.

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