



# Creative Point of View

Photoshop from the creative to the practical

■ BY KATRIN EISMANN

## Processing Surreal Fantasy

As fine-art photographers look through the viewfinder to compose images, we really see the image in our mind's eye, which is rarely the image that the camera records. A camera cannot appreciate composition, color, and detail, or revel in juxtaposition, irony, and beauty.

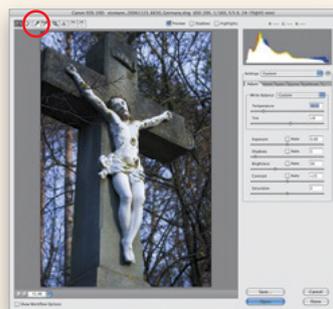
Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) and Photoshop Lightroom are tremendous tools to enhance the emotional aspect of images by letting you bend the rules of reality-bound image processing and create subtle and moody images. Because you're working with RAW files, you can rework and reinterpret the same image many times without ever degrading the original file. Or, a different way of thinking about RAW files is that working with Camera Raw files allows you to take the same image to a variety of photo labs to process the image one day as a color slide, the next day as infrared, and the next day as a carefully crafted black-and-white print.

In most cases, the goal of processing digital files is to create color-neutral and well-exposed images, something that I've been doing for years but which, to be honest, was becoming rather tedious. Now I'm enjoying breaking the rules and experimenting by darkening images, skewing color, and adding noise to create images that are moody and mysterious. I use ACR and Photoshop Lightroom to aggressively adjust image color, exposure, saturation, and contrast, and then Photoshop to add edges and textures to deconstruct the photographic aspect of the image. For me, the powerful simplicity of using ACR or Lightroom for creative work allows me to concentrate and react to the image rather than be distracted by which type of Photoshop layer or filter effect to use. Working creatively processing RAW images is a very subjective and emotional method that can be a welcome break from the dogma of correct, picture-perfect image production.

*Note:* When experimenting with extreme creative RAW processing, work with graphical images rather than images with subtle transitions and fine detail.

### Creative RAW processing

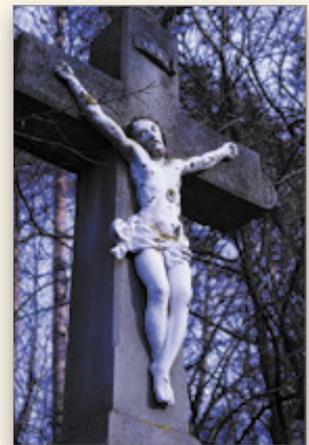
The three primary aspects to manipulate in creative RAW processing are: color, exposure, and contrast. To change color, start by using the



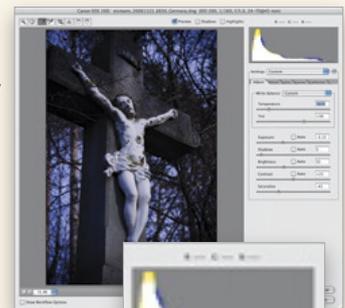
White Balance tool in Camera Raw to create a neutral image. Then, with approach #1, use the Adjust sliders to create the color you desire: the Temperature slider controls blue (left) to yellow (right); while the Tint slider is responsible for green (left) to red (right) colors.

Or try approach #2, which I prefer:

**STEP ONE:** With the White Balance tool, click on areas in the area that shouldn't be neutral. In this example, by clicking on a brownish speck of bark in the background, the entire image shifted toward a rich blue.

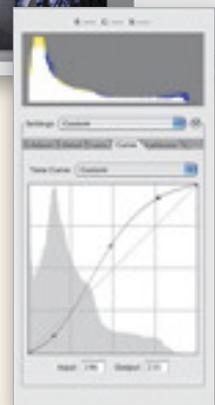


**STEP TWO:** Once the color best reflects the mood, adjust the Exposure, Shadows, and Brightness of the image to push the sunny afternoon walk into the darker evening hours.



**STEP THREE:** After clicking on the Lens tab, I often darken the image edges by taking the Vignetting slider all the way to the left. And finally, I always refine the image using the Curve tab.

As you can see, the steep curve has separated the lighter values of the crucifix from the blue, winter trees. What the camera recorded and what I perceived are very different (see before and after next page).



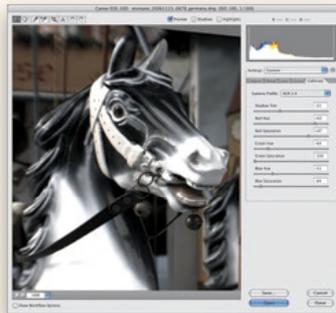


Before



After

The third approach to twist color in ACR is to adjust the sliders under the Calibrate tab. Because the horse is black and white, I first desaturated the image (under the Adjust tab, set Saturation to -55).



Original

Next, we'll click on the Calibrate tab and adjust the sliders to shift the color of the background.

Here's the original untouched RAW file and our processed, interpreted version.



Processed image

**Rough it up**

One way to add texture to an image is to give it a gritty, noisy look as seen in the close-up at top right.

I find that the standard Add Noise filter in Photoshop

is very limited while the Film Grain filter offers more grain variety. One problem is that I work in 16-bit images, and the Film Grain filter only works in 8-bit. Here's a trick to sneak around this limitation.

*Katrin Eismann is the author of Photoshop Restoration & Retouching and Photoshop Masking & Compositing. In 2005, she was inducted into the Photoshop Hall of Fame and in 2006, she was named Chair of the MPS in Digital Photography department at the School of Visual Arts in NYC (www.sva.edu/digitalphoto).*

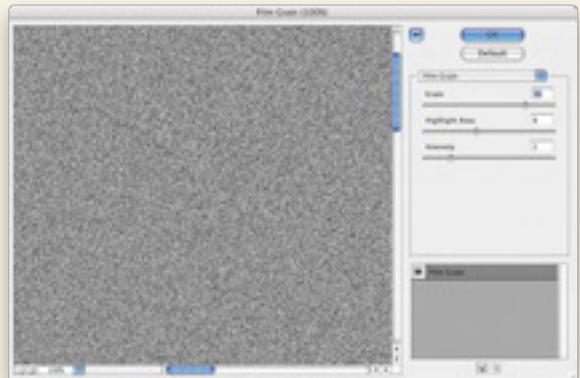


Film Grain filter applied

**STEP ONE:** Open the image to be roughed up in Photoshop, click on the Background layer, and Select>All followed by Edit>Copy and then File>New. In the New dialog, next to Color Mode, make sure to choose 8-bit, and click OK. Deselect your original image by pressing Command-D (PC: Ctrl-D).

**STEP TWO:** With your new file active, choose Edit>Fill and in the Fill dialog, select Use 50% Gray, Normal blend mode, and 100% Opacity.

**STEP THREE:** Next, go under the Filter menu and choose Artistic>Film Grain. In the dialog, adjust the sliders to create your grain, and click OK.



Now you have a grainy file that's exactly the same size as your image and you can drag-and-drop or copy-and-paste the noise layer onto your image file to roughen it up. Make sure you change this noise layer's blend mode to either Overlay or Soft Light to conceal the gray and reveal only the noise.

In creative RAW editing, knowing exactly what each slider does is completely unimportant. Rather, adjusting a slider and responding to the image is essential, and every change you apply will reveal new image interpretations and personal insights as to how you see the world. ■

ALL IMAGES BY KATRIN EISMANN