# Visualization: Create from Capture to Post
## by Arik Gorban

Program Objective – explain and demonstrate why every picture requires post work

- Pictures are never as good as they can be, straight out of the camera
- In the past, many photographers considered the darkroom work to be the creative work
- The camera doesn't see what we see in our mind's eye
    - We can ignore and not see distracting objects
    - We are very focused on our subject
    - We interpret colors (e.g., white looks white regardless of ambient light color)
    - We see in 3D and we see motion
    - We see highlight and shadow details
    - We use other senses to provide a more complete image of what we see
- Post work allows us to close some of the gaps and even embellish some details to create impact and make a point
- Post work allows us to create a new reality from our imagination
- Certain corrections can only be made in post processing, for example
    - Perspective correction, noise reduction, selective sharpening, chromatic aberration removal, dust removal, light falloff
- We should still get the best picture possible out of the camera
- However, the best raw image may not be the best final image
- Best Image – Traditional vs. Raw

| Traditional (no post work / film) | Raw |
|---|---|
| Crop in camera as close to the desired final presentation. | Leave some margins to allow for different aspect ratios, perspective correction, and cloning source. |
| Expose for final presentation, getting the best contrast and color saturation. | Expose for best data (wide tonal range; good shadow details, but no, or minimal, clipping of highlights). Create desired mood with global and local tonal adjustments. |
| Often need to compromise on composition to avoid distracting objects. | Shoot for best composition. Distracting objects can be removed in post processing. |

Levels of post work

- Simple adjustments – cropping, global adjustments to tones and colors, noise reduction, spot removal
- Complex image correction – extensive cloning, localized tonal adjustment, distortion control, portrait and body enhancement, fix clothing, background replacement
- Image creation (digital art) – use Photoshop to create new images

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About Ethics

- No picture represents reality accurately
    - 2D, perspective, angle, distortion, lighting, moment in time
    - Greatest manipulation – a slice of reality taken out of context
- Post work manipulation was done in the darkroom before digital imaging
- Yosemite never looks the way it appears in Ansel Adams' pictures
- How much is too much? It depends on the purpose of the image and how we represent it
    - Digital Art / Pictorial
    - Portraits
    - Landscape / Cityscape / Street
    - Documentary / Nature / Photojournalism

## Simple adjustment (1-5 minutes)

- Cropping, rotation, and tonal adjustment
- Spot removal and minor cloning
- Noise removal
- sharpening
- Straightening verticals

## Complex image correction (5-30 minutes)

- Extensive cloning
- Localized tonal adjustment
- Distortion control
- HDR
- Portrait and body enhancement
- Fix clothing
- Background replacement

## Image creation (digital art)

- Adding elements from different pictures
- Textures and effects
- Lighting effects
- Special effects
- Painting

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**Common post processing problems**

- Leaving dust spots
- Over saturation
- Over sharpening
- Unrealistic HDR
- Grungy sky
- Bad sky replacement
    - Inconsistent lighting, perspective, and angle
    - Halos
- Bad content replacement (cloning, healing...)
- Poorly-converted B&W images

**My digital workflow**

- Download images (Camera connection or card reader)
- First pass - review and deletion of bad pictures
- Rename images
- Back up images
- Format the memory cards
- In Bridge: review and rank images (0, 3, 4, or 5 stars)
    - 0 stars – delete
    - 3 stars – save, but not process at this time
    - 4 stars – process when done with the 5-star images
    - 5 stars – process first
    - ***After a few days, I may review the images and revise some ranking***
- Make global adjustments to groups of images in ACR, as appropriate
    - Apply lens corrections
    - Correct keystoning (Geometry) and horizon leveling, crop
    - Adjust sharpening (remove or increase depending on ISO)
    - Adjust WB
    - Adjust exposure, highlights, shadows, whites, blacks), clarity, vibrance, dehaze
    - Make local tonal adjustments, using Masking tools
    - Remove dust spots and other small distracting objects
- Process individual images based on ranking
    - Noise reduction always first (if needed) and sharpening last
- Back up processed images (raw, XMP, and Jpeg) to an external disk and an SSD drive
    - 2nd disk kept offsite. Rotate and update monthly or after an important shoot
    - The SSD drive contains the new files since the rotation with the off-site drive

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**Final thoughts**

David duChemin - The Soul of the Camera

- Shoot what it feels like, not what it looks like. Show your own interpretation.
- Make a photograph ABOUT something, not OF something. You do that by making it your interpretation, using visual tools and language (timing, light, composition, shutter speed, aperture, exposure, ISO, noise, tones, post processing technique, etc.)
- Without the interpretation, the picture is a "Me Too" photograph.
- It is not the sharpness of the image to which people will respond. They will not one day in the distant future, speak about your stunning histogram.

Brooks Jensen - LensWork Magazine

- It's all about Content, Content, and Content.

**Final words**

- When you look at a scene/subject, consider what it can be, not just what it is. Be creative and experiment. Create collections of skies, textures, and objects.
- Take some pictures with large empty spaces that can be filled with text.
- Beware of the Illusion of Reality.
- Avoid three behaviors that hinder creativity: Laziness, Conformity, and Fear. (Guy Tal)
- Don't worry about creating a personal style. Follow your passion and vision and it will evolve. (Guy Tal)

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