

More on Light and Exposure in Photography – Arabella Dane

Histograms

When I am taking a picture with my Canon Camera, to make certain that I have enough light and not too much light, I generally take a picture and check my histogram to see if I have the exposure correct for that specific lighting situation. A Histogram looks like a graph. If all the data in my graph is piled up on the left side of the histogram, then my image is underexposed. None of the data has enough light. If it is all piled up on the right side of the graph, then my image is overexposed - in the lighter areas there will be no data. Don't worry about the peaks and valleys in your histogram, because as long as the data is touching, not pressing, on either edge, you will have correctly exposed images. By the way, even smart phones have histograms.

Different cameras display their histograms differently. The Histogram may be black or white or white with colors the latter being useful if you want to see exactly which pixels in which of your color channels are properly exposed. Here is a good site for explaining Histograms

<https://www.picture-power.com/what-is-a-histogram.html>.

Monochrome –

Sometimes I convert my images to Monochrome to find more interesting light within my image. Color can be distracting and often hides the structure of a composition. Monochrome tends to accentuate both the drama and the structure of your composition as well as eliminating all unnecessary details and accentuating the light, the shadows and the textures in the image. Here is an excellent article. <https://gurushots.com/article/black-and-white-photography-guide>

In my a color image of a feather caught in a weed, the pink out-of-focus flower in the background is a distraction, for me. So I processed it as a monochrome. In monochrome, the pink form becomes an important off-center light source coming from the background, accenting the feather and the base of the weed. I think that this image is very moody as a black and white, and the image is interesting as a sepia too although the color of the feather in the sepia is no longer white/white.

Color

Black & White

Sepia



I like the crispness one can achieve with black and white images, and the other dimensions within the Monochrome category: which includes sepia and any single hue in all its tints tones and shades. My favorite plugin for Monochrome is [Silver Efex Pro](#) which is free and gives you 38 variables to work with as well as lots of useful filters. The most important aspect of any monochrome image is to keep all the values and tones from bright white to gray to the blackest of blacks defined. An image that has muddy tones is not appealing at all. In Monochrome images, you want clarity.

Lights: Light Painting Using Reflectors and Diffusers and Flash– In Camera Club we explored **light painting** using flashlights. We set the cameras on tripods with timers to get long exposures, and then swirled the light all over the moving figures. It was great fun and we achieved some really kooky effects - with our models jumping around and our team bathing them with colored lights. A flash or a strobe also gives interesting effects.

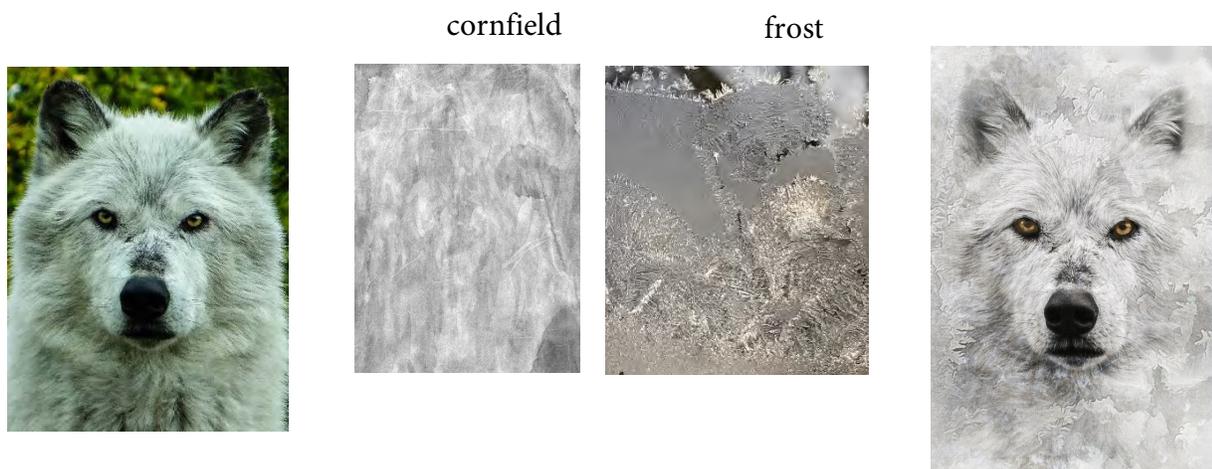
Using a **long exposure** to capture traffic lights makes wonderful light-trails in a pretty nighttime village scene. Using this same concept of slow shutter to make light trails works well for night sky photos too, as more light gets into the sensor the longer the shutter stays open.

Using a reflector for portraits and for outdoor shots when the light is too contrasting is a really good technique. My reflector has both a gold and a silver side, and if unzipped, can serve as a diffuser also. When I use it, I can direct the light wherever I want it! This works really well for me when I'm doing macro and closeup photography. Here is a link to an article on using a reflector/diffuser <https://photographylife.com/how-to-use-a-reflector>

Flash -I rarely use the flash that is built into my camera as that light seems so artificial to me. Sometimes I have actually used a flashlight in my macro work and although I do have some rim lights to put onto my macro lens, I've not used them except in class. It might work well when I am chasing butterflies.

Creative ways to change the light:

Of course, to get a different look, or to change the light in your background, you can change almost anything using various software afterwards, including combining any image with any background. For example: I photographed this wolf in the summer but wanted him to be on a white textured wintery background. Using **i-phone apps** and **Photoshop**, I combined 3 images– the wolf in summer with a photo of a cornfield (transformed into a texture) for the background, and a picture of frost on a window to be the foreground. I sandwiched the wolf in-between these two winter-like almost monochromatic textural layers to get my winter wolf.



All this is time consuming, and fun. The results can be unexpected - taking your photography to new dimensions of creativity. There is no end to what you can do! **There are no rules, only guidelines**, so challenge yourself with exploring different ways to light up your photographs both in camera and in post processing or both!



How you apply the photography techniques is up to you. YOU are the artist painting with light. The results should please YOU. The more you learn about how to achieve the results you want, the more creative and successful your images will become. Enjoy the journey!

Please don't hide your light under any basket, share your photographs with us! Arabella Dane