

On Taming Photoshop

BY JIM CORNFIELD

When asked why he'd suddenly ended his formerly prolific output, a celebrated author once said, "I gave up writing, because there's already too much truth in the world—an overproduction which apparently cannot be consumed."

That writer, most likely, never knew how neatly his comment could apply to Adobe Photoshop...or more specifically, how it relates to the current mountain of printed and online tutorials that address, in ever-increasing detail, the convoluted wizardry of this universally accepted gold standard for after-capture software.

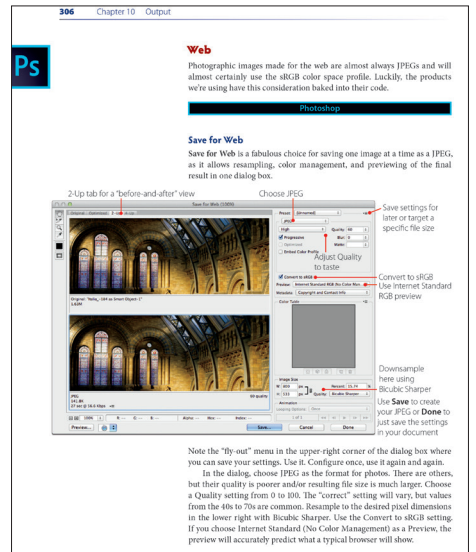
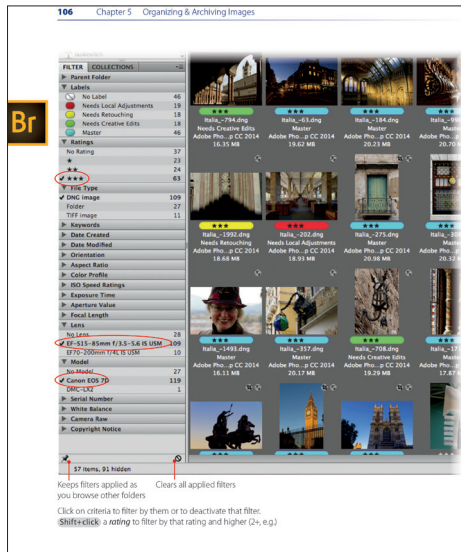
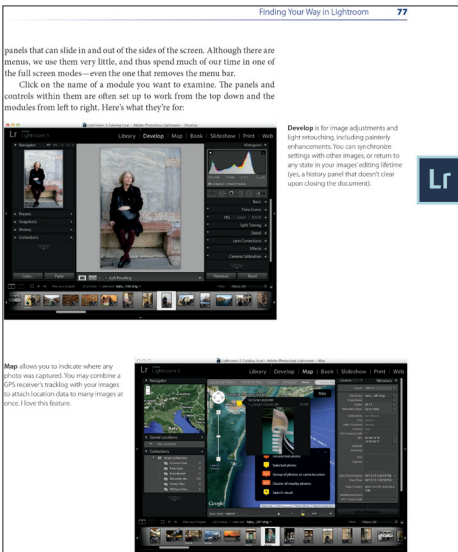
For obvious reasons, such books have proliferated to keep pace with Photoshop's progressive transformation—from its beginnings as a tool for simple image

editing in the 1990s to a lumbering software monster with multiple functionalities—for not just photographers but also designers, illustrators, architects, animators, filmmakers and practically everyone else on some kind of visual mission.

Fortunately, a new title has appeared in this ever-expanding library to guide us through typical after-capture scenarios by navigating around the clutter of tools, options and arrays of creative choices that can make Photoshop a daunting experience. *Photoshop CC and Lightroom: A Photographer's Handbook*, from the California-based publishing group Rocky Nook, is a refreshing, no-nonsense primer that helps lift Photoshop literature above the grim accumulation of "truths that cannot be consumed."

Photoshop CC and Lightroom 5
A Photographer's Handbook
By Stephen Laskevitch
Rocky Nook Inc.
www.rockynook.com
344 pp. | \$44.95

PHOTO © STEPHEN LASKEVITCH



Above: In *Photoshop CC and Lightroom*, Stephen Laskevitch uses well-paced, coherent graphics to illustrate and compare the capabilities of Adobe tools, such as Lightroom (left), Adobe Bridge (middle) for image editing and organizing, and Photoshop (right) for key image-manipulation functions, up through outputting to print and web use.

A FEW STEPS

The *Handbook's* author, Stephen Laskevitch, is acutely sensitive to the pitfalls that lurk within this image-manipulation system that nearly all photographers rely on in one way or another. "The Adobe Photoshop products," he writes, "are some of the most complex programs many of us will ever use... Although we are provided with thousands of complex techniques for editing images, most users (and most images) don't need all of that complexity. In fact, only a few steps are needed to get the vast majority of images to shine."

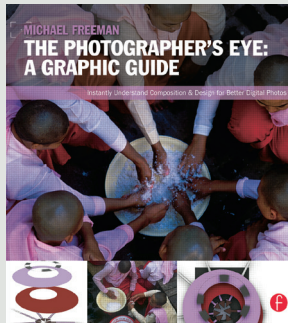
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Despite the good intentions, of many of the authors who walk the circuitous road of digital post instruction, they have difficulty identifying those "few steps" for their readers. Laskevitch is clearly dedicated to an uncomplicated agenda. "My goal," he writes, "is to present [Photoshop techniques] in a reasonably accessible way." As the founder of Luminous Works Training and Consulting in Seattle, Washington, Laskevitch's teaching credentials are impeccable; he's an Adobe Certified Instructor and has been teaching for 30 years, designing workflows for hundreds of photographers and companies, and training creative individuals and firms.

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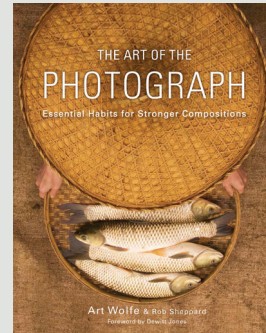
By Michael Freeman

The great thing about this book is that author Michael Freeman backs up every idea with stunning work samples, each of them displayed and deconstructed, using his signature diagrams, outtakes, and acute design sense on every spread.

A companion volume to his 2007 bestselling *The Photographer's Eye*, the 190-page package makes for a rich master class in composing powerful, arresting images—both in camera and during digital post. As always, Freeman brings his carefully thought-out devices to the party—having human subjects react to off-camera action, for example, to suggest a narrative, or selectively focusing (or defocusing) foreground and background detail, juxtaposing action, in the field or by stitching disparate elements in after-capture, using prominent curves or rectilinear shapes to define the active part of a frame.



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The Art of the Photograph

Essential Habits for Stronger Compositions

By Art Wolfe and Rob Sheppard

Veteran photographer Art Wolfe is best known for the startling graphic power of his imagery. In *The Art of the Photograph*, he brings together his extraordinary imagery with background anecdotes on every shot, each image bearing its own distinctive lesson in technique and esthetics.

Wolfe uses every photographic device in his toolbox—from color and optics to framing, post production techniques and pure instinct—in order to craft an extraordinary one-volume course in creative imaging.

Co-authored by former *Outdoor Photographer* magazine editor Rob Sheppard, the book is a fabulous resource of great technical and creative advice synthesized from two distinguished photographic careers. And, with the possible exception of one memorable chapter, "The 10 Deadly Sins of Composition," the whole thing is accomplished without a rule in sight.



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principal framework, Laskevitch takes his readers from the basics of image editing and manipulation through the fundamentals of establishing an efficient workflow using the Adobe family of products. The goal for his readers is "the creation of good images," and, most importantly, his approach to teaching "doesn't showcase wow-factor Photoshop techniques...the workflow discussed is complete," he writes, "but I will not discuss the extreme manipulations often considered Photoshop mischief." At the same time, Laskevitch does assure us—

despite the early chapters on such raw fundamentals as basic terminology and concepts—that this book is not a third-grade version of *My First Photoshop*. It doesn't skimp on explicating Photoshop's key image-manipulation capabilities: "I include all the key techniques necessary for good image editing: using layers and layer blending, color correction, printer pro-files, and more."

Efficient workflow is the backbone of Laskevitch's approach, and he demonstrates with clear graphics how Photoshop and Lightroom, along with their major

companion softwares Adobe Bridge and Adobe Camera Raw, provide sometimes different, and sometimes complementary outcomes in the digital darkroom. If, like many of us, you're behind on software upgrades, you'll still be current with the book's techniques, which, for the most part, work well with previous versions of these Adobe products.

No matter where any photographer's entry point to the digital universe might be, from senior portraits to fine art, we're all part of the same sprawling grid of data, vastly beyond anyone's need to scan more than a tiny corner, but eminently capable of giving rise to complicated behemoths like Photoshop. Authors like Laskevitch are more important than ever to help us work with such tools, and, just as importantly, to know when it's time to stop. ☺

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