



## Introduction

The creation of works of art is a highly complex and sometimes mysterious process. The relationships artists strike up with themselves, their chosen subject(s), medium(s), as well as the uses they put their creations to and the contexts they place them in all speak volumes about the true nature of their creations.

An artist's creations come out of far more than the activities in their primary medium. How artist's get there is, perhaps, just as important as where they arrive. This is the creative process rather than the creative product. This is what this book is about – my creative process.

My creative process combines tools, methods, and modes of perception from a variety of what only seem to be separate creative disciplines – such as photography, video, painting, sculpture, writing, and music – but which are in fact extensions of one another and of the creative spirit as a whole. I find the synergy created by flowing from one to the other and sometimes combining them in finished works tremendously stimulating, enriching, and even enlivening.

Studies and unfinished works open a window into how finished works are started, unfold, develop, and reach maturity, sometimes bearing fruit for many years and other times being quickly eclipsed by new creations. Along with studies I present related finished works, not just to show outcomes, but more importantly so that we can trace the progressions of both thoughts and feelings and the influences media and modes of participation with it.

Experiencing works of art is in many ways an act of recreation, which we are all involved in; each experience is an opportunity to develop a greater awareness of the world around us, the things we create, and our responses to both. Insights into one person's creative process provide windows into all of our individual creative processes and the creative process in general.

This is not a technical book of camera and software techniques (like my book *Adobe Photoshop Master Class*) or a manual on how to write, draw and photograph, though I describe many ways I do all of these things and share some of my results. (If you wish to see only finished results view my other books.) Instead, this book presents many different aspects of my artistic explorations and the relationships between them; and, above all, the creative process is a process of exploration, a journey of discovery that offers many insights along the way.

It is my hope that your experience of this book offers you many insights not only into my creations but also into others' and particularly your own, made now or in the future. You may be inspired, at one time or another, to try one or more of these activities yourself, practicing them in your own ways for your own purposes, as you progress on your own creative journey.

COLOR

VARIATION

## Variation

I explore many variations of color for a variety of reasons – to open up creative opportunities, to understand color better, to improve power and precision of expression, and because variation supports the visual statements I'm called to make.

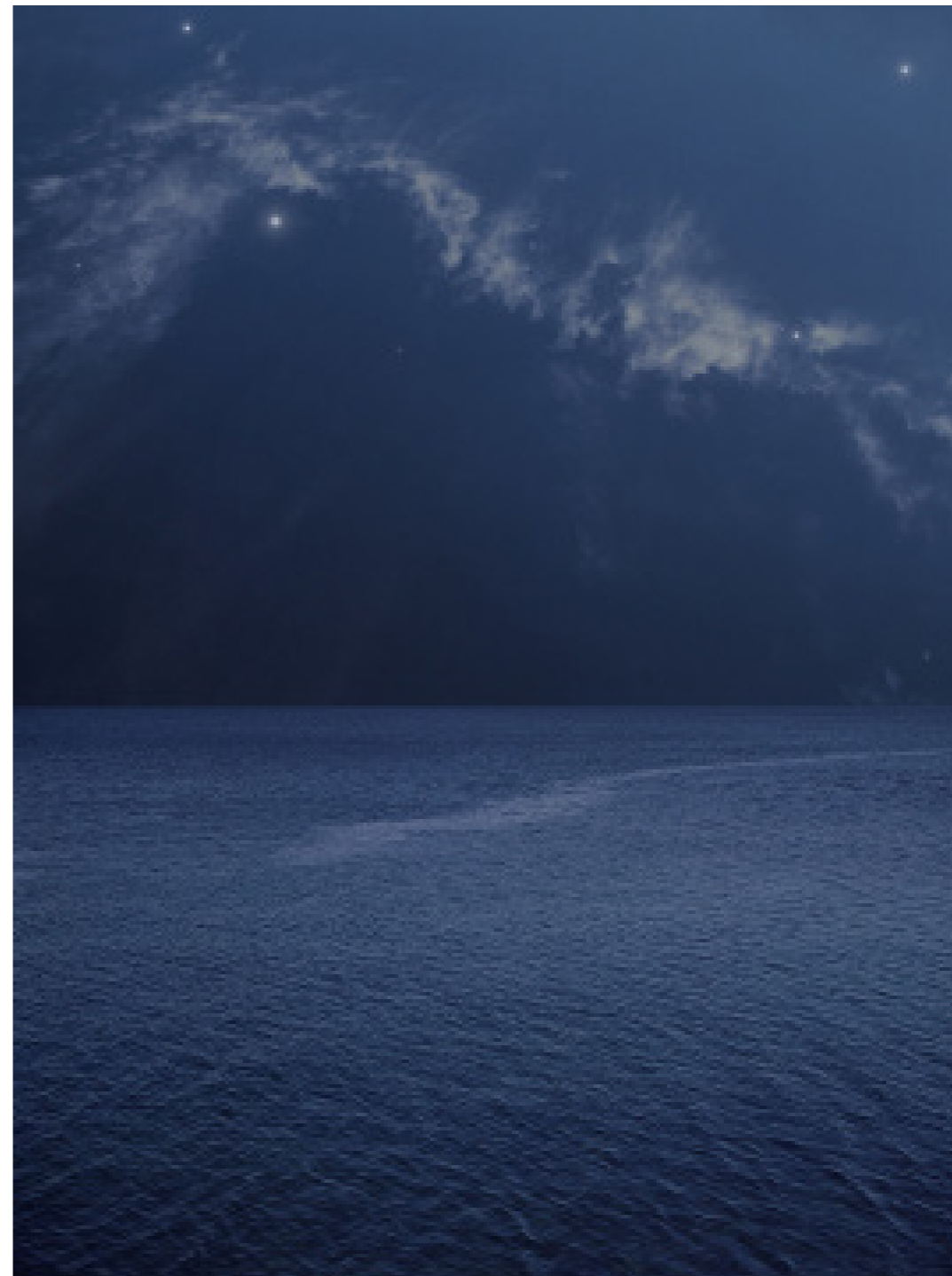
I'm fascinated by the relative nature of color and the transformations it undergoes with changing atmospheric conditions and times of day (or longer periods of time). I wonder at how particular arrangements of colors can suggest various qualities of light and the presence of the things modifying them; shade, night, fog, pearlescence, fluorescence, transparency, translucency, etc. I marvel at how subtle variety within a unified field of color suggest motion and change, either in single images or between many images. I'm thrilled to explore the differences between colors that make things appear lit from without and those that make them look lit from within.

For a visual artist, developing an understanding color is like developing an understanding of language for a writer. Having studied color all my life, I still have so many questions. And it's really the questions that generate more than the answers. These questions include ... At what point does one color become another? Why? At what point does a color no longer seem representational? Why? How does color suggest space and volume? How do the three elements of color (luminosity, hue, and saturation) change the quality of light portrayed and our response to it? How much of color is physical and how much is psychological?

I give each body of work I create a unified color palette and then explore as many variations within it as possible, first creating an envelope and then stretching it, until it breaks. Whether a variation expands or breaks the code, tells me more about the nature of the work I'm creating.



Correspondence I (Sonata), 1998



Correspondence I (Nocturne), 1998



Variation IA, 2002



Variation IB, 2002



Variation IC, 2002



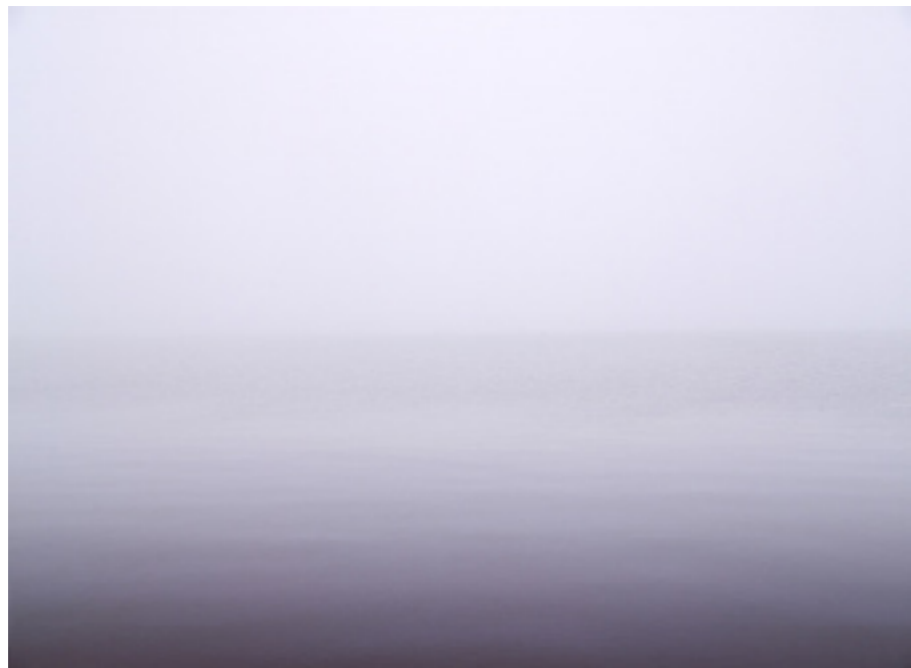
Variation ID, 2002



Correspondence XII (Nocturne), 1999



Correspondence XIII (Nocturne), 1999



Condensation Prelude In Gray II, 2002



Condensation Prelude In Gray III, 2002



Condensation Prelude In Gray IV, 2002



Condensation Prelude In Gray IX, 2002

COMPOSITION

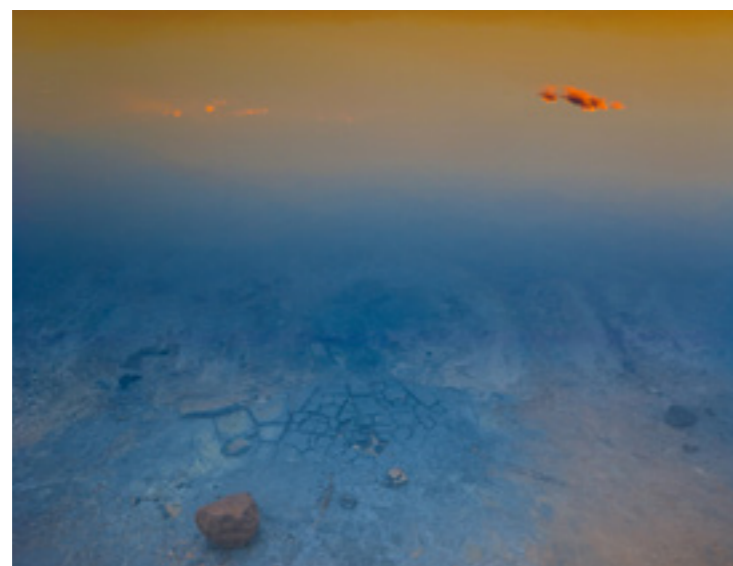
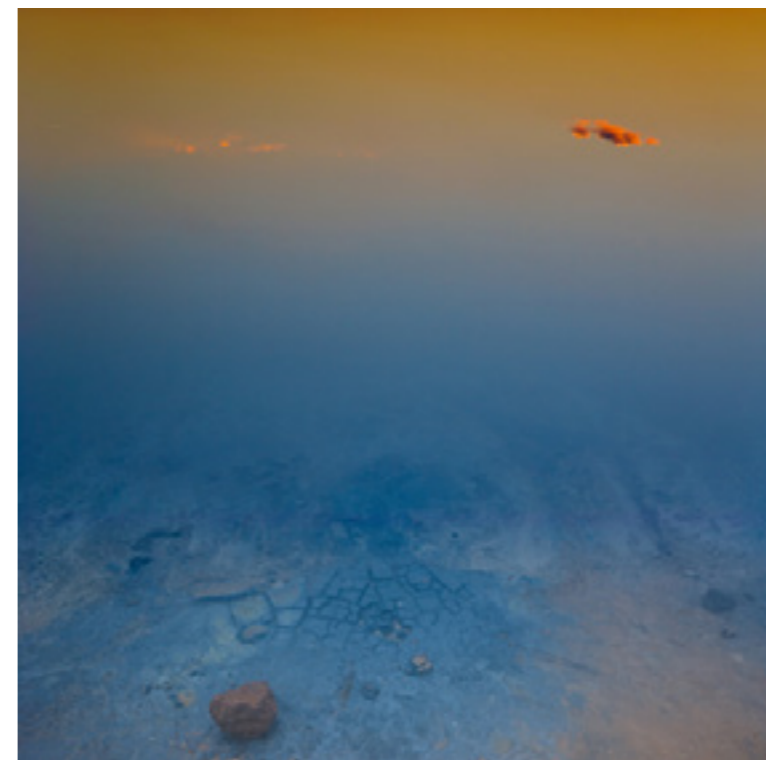
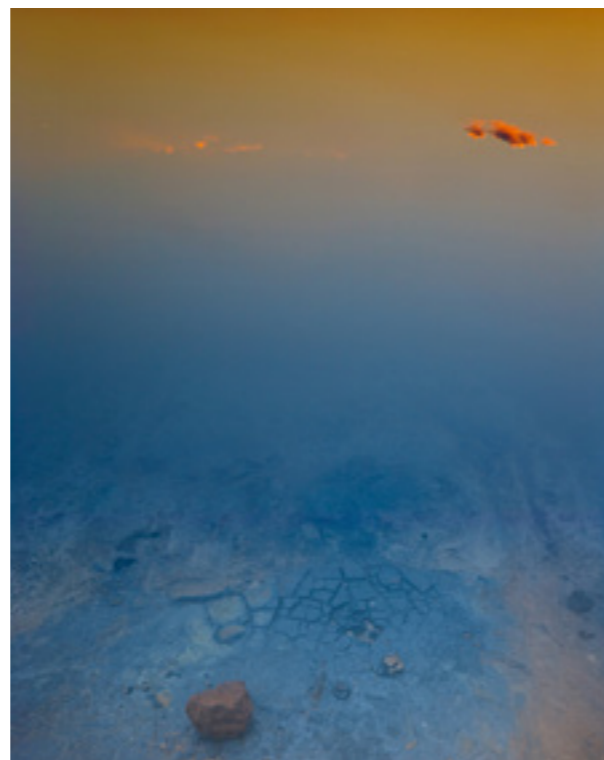
ASPECT RATIO

## **Aspect Ratio**

The proportion of an image's frame is a fundamental part of its statement.

Unlike many documentary photographers who keep the proportion of their image frames constant to reduce their presence and suggest that their images haven't been altered, I do the opposite for precisely the opposite reason, to more clearly highlight that my images have been altered by me. The question of whether an image has or has not been altered is a misleading question. Every image, whether documentary or artistic, has been altered, but to different degrees, in different ways, and for different reasons. Questions of method, extent, and intent are more revealing and interesting.

I use the proportion of the frame expressively. Because different proportions each add something different, I don't standardize, I customize the proportions of my images. I distort the frame, crop the frame, and/or extend the frame through compositing and sometimes retouching, before settling on a final solution that creates the strongest statement.



Reflection XLIII, 2010



Correspondence XXXV (Nocturne), 2010



Suffusion V, 2007

DRAWING

# STORYBOARDS

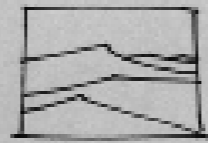
## Storyboarding

Those who think of my work only in classic fine art terms, where theme and variation are emphasized, may find it surprising that I also think about developing bodies of work cinematically, where a variety of storytelling devices can be used to guide image selection and framing.

Photo essays, another form of sequential art, rely on five types of shots to move a viewer forward through a primarily but not exclusively linear structure, either concisely and literally or loosely and figuratively: 1 set the stage; 2 identify the main character; 3 reveal significant detail; 4 show human interest; 5 identify the decisive moment; 6 show the outcome; 7 make a conclusion. While most stories have a beginning, middle, and end, not every photo essay uses all of these shots; in fact it's a creative challenge to see how few shots you can tell a story in. How you sequence and move from one shot to the next is just as important as which shots are included. A variety of conventions can be used creatively to move from one shot to the next; zooms and pans, fades and cuts, etc.

Creating storyboards helps me structure my visual thinking and suggests new ideas, approaches, and treatments. Asking questions about how a body of work does or does not fit into a storyboard structure also helps me identify the type of statement I'm developing (narrative, formal, or expressive) and the balance it strikes between content, form, feeling.

I search not only for strong single images that stand on their own, but also related suites of images that complement and advance each other. My work is an exploration of relationships between and progressions through a set of connected ideas.



①

SET STAGE

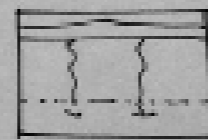
WIDE FIELD



②

NO MAIN CHARACTER

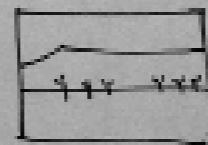
WIDE



③

SIGNIFICANT DETAIL

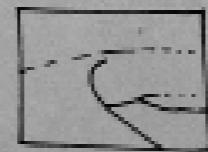
SAND SLIDES



④

ADDEND INTEREST

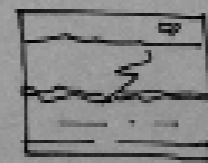
WIND TREES



⑤

CRUCIAL MOMENT

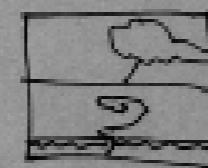
WIND/SAND STORM



⑥

OUTCOME

SAND WIND TO SEA

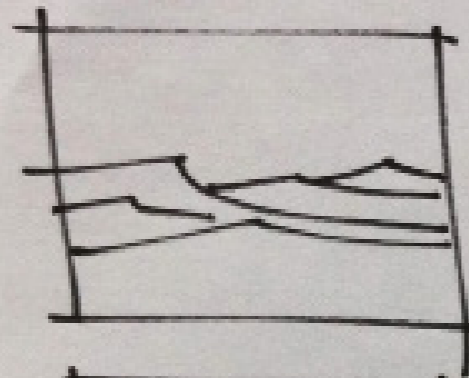


⑦

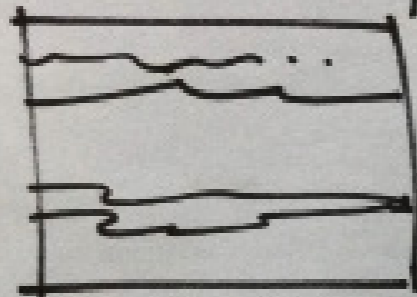
CONCLUSION

SAND/STORM  
STORM and HORIZON

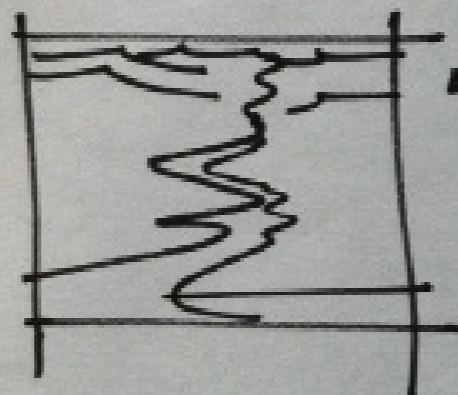
① SET STAGE



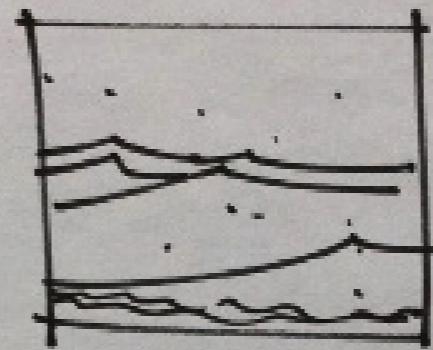
MOUNTAINS



COAST



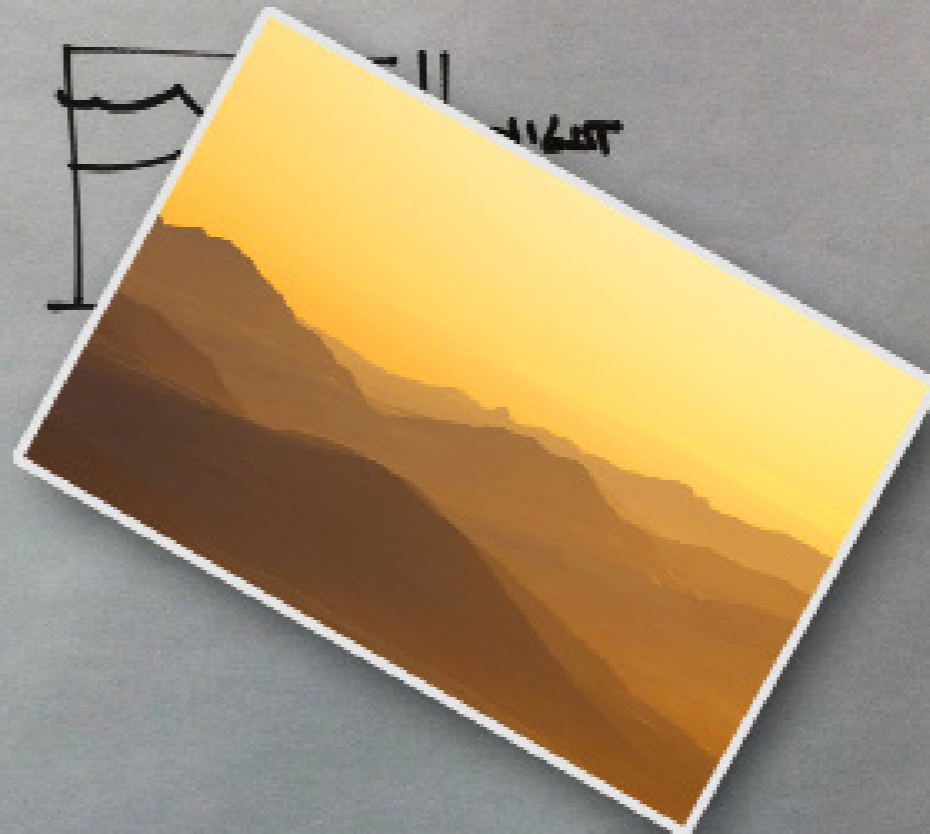
MOUNTAINS



MOUNTAINS

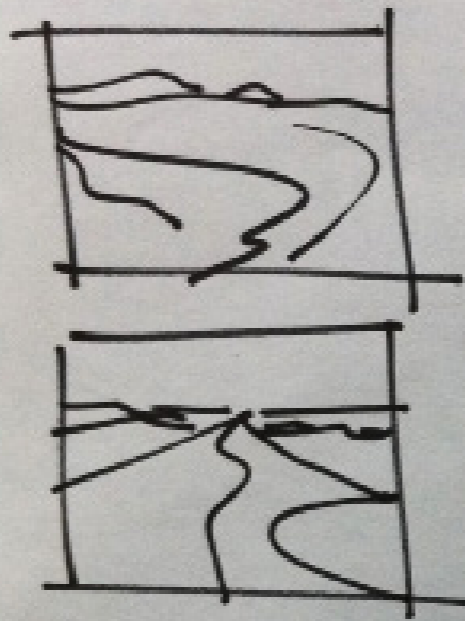


MOUNTAINS



Stage

② 1st MAIN CHARACTER



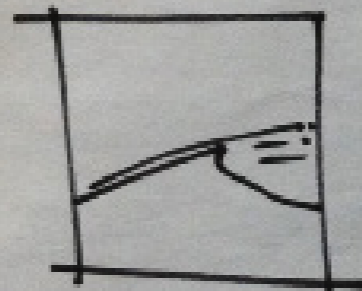
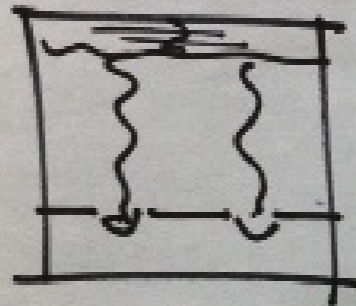
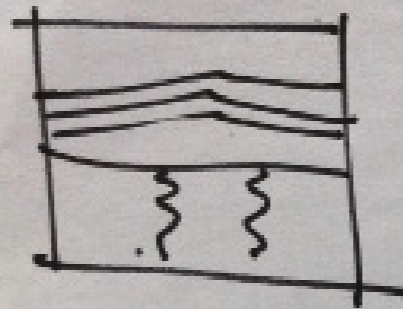
LINE

HORIZON



Main Character

③ SIGNIFICANT DETAIL



2 COLPS - BLOCK

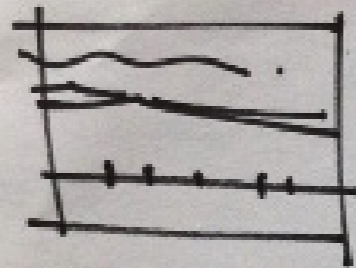
SLIDE

SPRAY

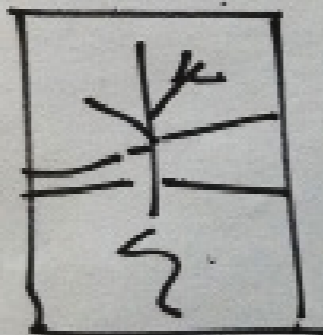
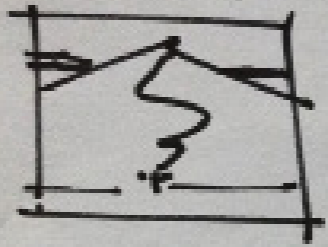


Significant Detail

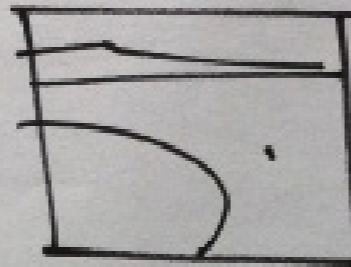
# ④ HUMAN INTEREST



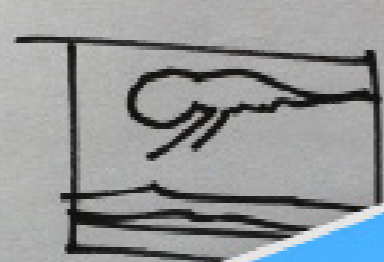
TREES



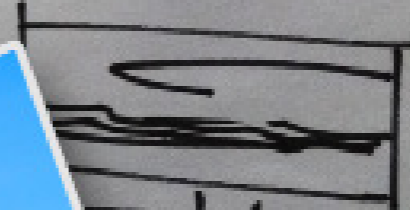
SCALES



← HUMAN INTEREST

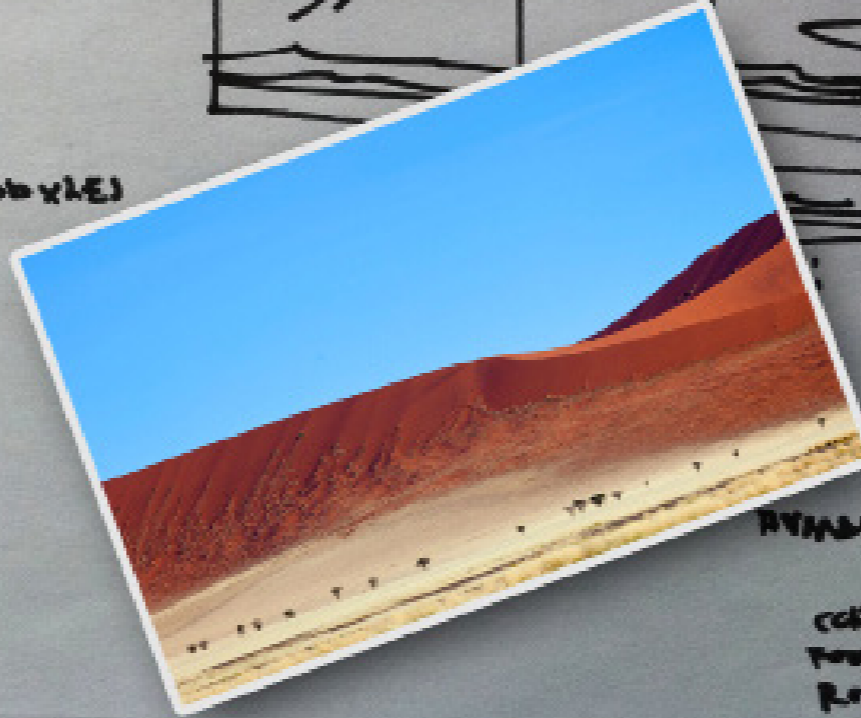


↓



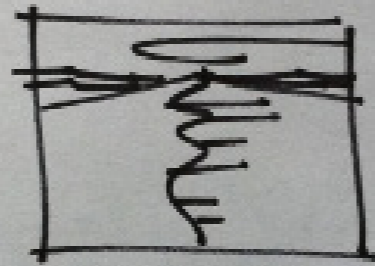
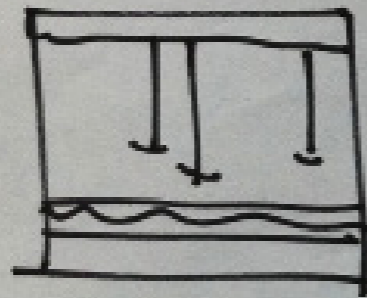
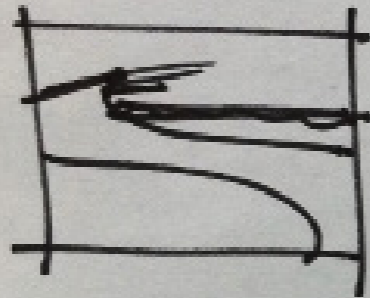
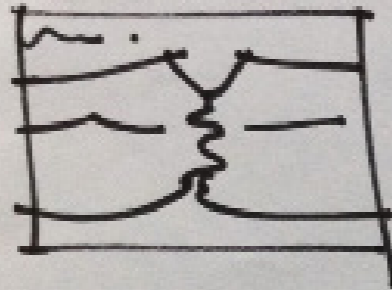
HUMAN INTEREST

CENTRAL  
FOOTPATH  
ROAD



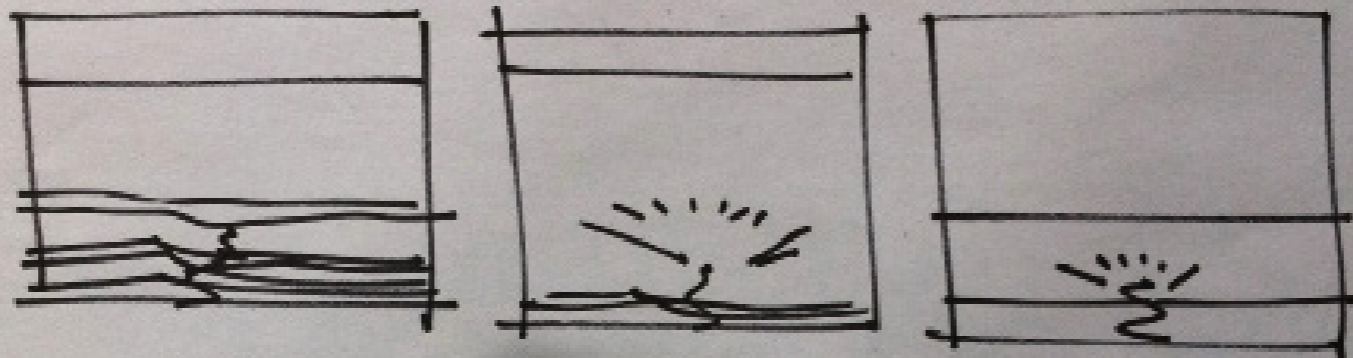
Human Interest

⑤ DECISIVE MOMENT



Decisive Moment

⑥ OUTCOME



Outcome



This story can be told in fewer than seven shots.

iPHONE

PAINTERLY

## **Painterly**

Distressing my iPhone images is a way of differentiating them from my finished images. I consider my iPhone images sketches. For me, they're an invitation to explore many ideas, to see in many different ways, to make images in many different ways, and to make images of many things I ordinarily wouldn't make images of or in places I ordinarily wouldn't make images in.

I quickly realized I had so many ideas it was easy to make one kind of image in one way and move on to another kind of image and another way of seeing, without settling into one long enough to truly understand it. So I began making planned experiments, exerting the discipline to return to a way of seeing to understand it more fully. Some experiments came easily, other required more effort. Some experiments were short, some persist today.

I also quickly realized I had strong tendencies towards certain ways of looking, so much so that I had to encourage myself to resist the temptation to move towards it too quickly. One of the most persistent experiments has been making photographs appear more painterly.

There are many forces at the root of this impulse: reducing detail in order to look more broadly at fundamentals; creating greater unity between elements in the frame; introducing rather than finding gesture; moving images away from an objective quality and making them more subjective; highlighting my presence in each image so as not to confuse the image with the real thing and acknowledge that my image represents only one viewpoint amid many possible viewpoints; asserting the past nature of what is depicted; painting for a lifetime. I'm sure there are many more dimensions to this impulse and the reason I continue to work with it is I have so much more to learn from it.



Bonneville, Utah



Washington DC



Knoxville, Tennessee



Bath, Maine



Monhegan Island, Maine

WRITING

ASSOCIATION

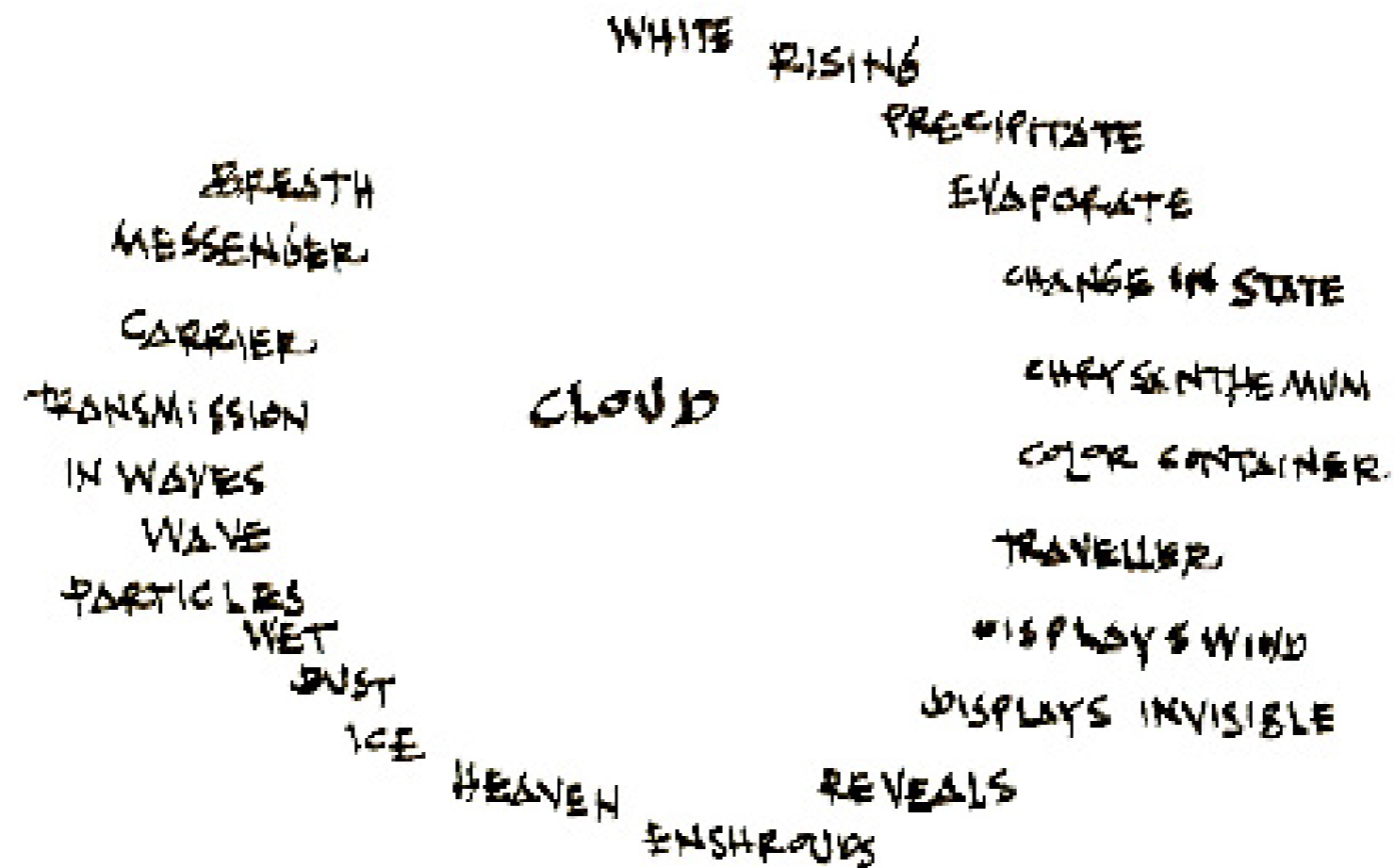
## **Association**

Not just for psychologists, association is an integral part of any creative process. It's one way we make new connections. It's one way we bring hidden things to light. I find association particularly useful for revealing the many ways I personally relate to and the subjective responses I have to ... well, anything.

The way we associate and the graphic structure we give it changes the never-the-same twice outcomes. Linear association is highly divergent, quickly moving far away from the starting point; it's useful when you don't know what you're looking for. Clustered association is highly focused, always returning to a seed; it's useful when you want to explore the depths of one thing. Branching association combines the benefits of both linear and clustered, revealing larger patterns including webs of connections. Each mode has its benefits.

We're all highly associative. Children are more freely associative because they are not as practiced at filtering this ability. Adults can learn to turn this filtering process on and off to uncover and develop richness and depth in their inner lives.

CLOUD	CLOUD
WHITE	BREATH
BLACK	IN/OUT
BREATH	PARTICLES
VOID	RIPING WAVE
WHITE	DESCRIBING INVISIBLE
RESIDUE	FELT
REMAIN	UNSEEN
EPHEMERAL	SEEN
EMERALD	BLACK
DIAZONY	WHITE
WARD	STARS
ETERNAL	DUST
NOTHING	BECOMING
CLEAR	UNBECOMING
PRISON	KNOWLEDGE
TRANS MISSION	EXPAND
EMANATION	





Branching Association

INTEGRATION

HOW IT ALL COMES  
TOGETHER

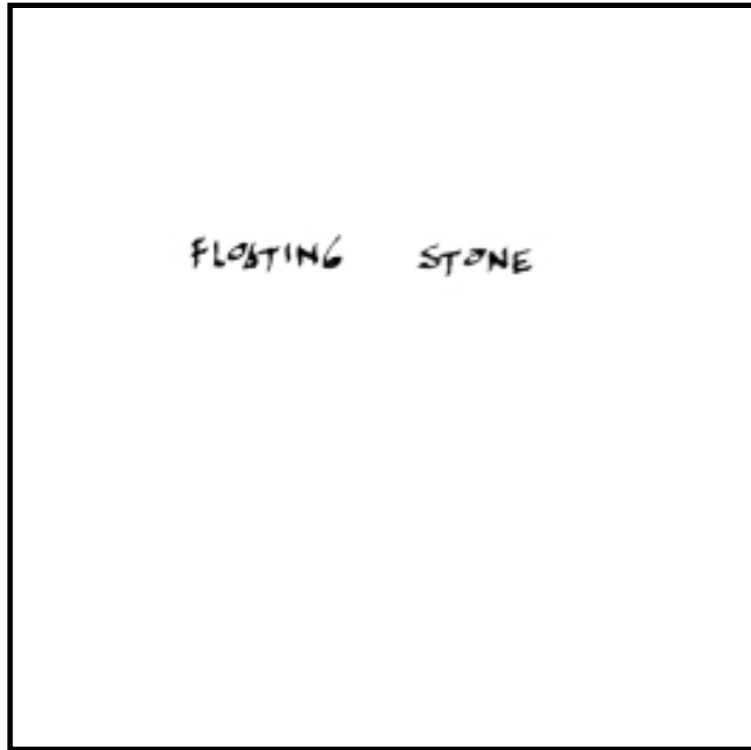
## How It All Comes Together

I'm often asked, "How long does it take you to make an image?" My response is, "Between fifteen minutes and six months." But the real answer is forty-seven years and counting. The things we experience and make are products of the lives we live. From the smallest ripple to the largest wave, everything we experience is significant.

Heraclitus said, "You can't step in the same river twice." The river is always changing. That's true of us as well. We can't step in a river the same way twice. We're always changing. What we do changes us. As part of creation, our individual acts of creation make us co-creators. Whether it's in small or large ways, we change our world. We are created and we create our selves. Our creative lives are often the truest reflection of the people we have been, are, and hope to become.

We are what we do. This is why process matters so much.

*When I am asked "Do you previsualize or postvisualize?" I answer, "Yes." I explore many possibilities. Looking at the images on the facing page, it would be tempting to conclude that my ideas progress from written to drawn to photographed and composited or from verbal to visual. In reality I move back and forth between many different media and approach them in many different ways. If you were to draw a map of my creative process, instead of a straight line I'd draw a web, where every piece is connected to all of the others.*



Writing



Drawing



Photography

[Buy the complete ebook here.](#)

## **BIOGRAPHY**

John Paul Caponigro is an internationally recognized visual artist. His multi-disciplinarian approach is photocentric. His primary focus is the environment.

Exhibited internationally, his work has been purchased by numerous private and public collections including Princeton University, the Estée Lauder collection, and the Smithsonian.

Respected as an authority on creativity, digital imaging, and fine art digital printing, he is a highly sought after speaker, lecturing extensively at conferences, universities, and museums, in venues as diverse as Photoshop World and MIT. He conducts workshops globally.

John Paul's work has been published widely in numerous periodicals and books including Art News and The Ansel Adams Guide.

A contributing editor for Digital Photo Pro and a columnist for The Huffington Post, he is the author of Adobe Photoshop Master Class and the DVD series

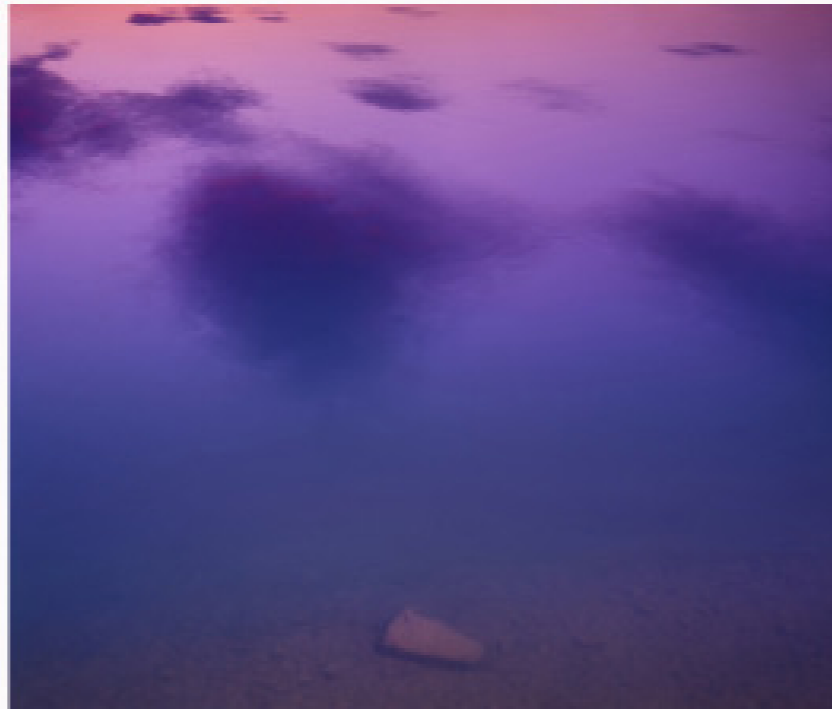
R/Evolution. His conversations with over fifty photographers resides in the permanent collection of The George Eastman House

John Paul is a member of the Photoshop Hall of Fame, a Canon Explorer of Light, an Epson Stylus Pro, and an X-Rite Coloratti. His clients include Adobe, Apple, Blurb, Canon, Epson, Kodak, and Sony.

Learn more. Visit [www.johnpaulcaponigro.com](http://www.johnpaulcaponigro.com) and receive free subscriptions to his enews Insights and Collectors Alert.

## PRINTS

Prints are available for purchase here.  
Prints are ready to ship for these exhibits.



## **VISIT**

Visit [www.johnpaulcaponigro.com](http://www.johnpaulcaponigro.com)

See more images.

Read artist's statements.

Listen to the artist speak.

Watch the artist work.

Receive Insights and Collectors Alert enews free.

## **CONTACT US**

Inquire about prints, commissions, licensing, lectures and exhibits.

Phone 207-354-0578

Email [info@johnpaulcaponigro.com](mailto:info@johnpaulcaponigro.com)

Mail 73 Cross Road, Cushing, ME, 04563

Sign up for Insights enews free.

<http://www.johnpaulcaponigro.com/lib/insights.php>

Get access to hundreds of free resources.  
Learn about new ebooks, dvds, seminars, and workshops.

Connect with me on [Google+](#), [Twitter](#), and/or [Facebook](#).

Copyright © 2013 by John Paul Caponigro.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means without prior written permission.