**The Intimate Landscape.**

**Introduction.**

Landscape is unquestionably the most popular photographic genre, firstly because it is so accessible, but equally important, it is a means of allowing us to communicate with nature. We live busy lives so having a period to indulge the joys of nature is not only good for our health, but also our psyche. My concern is that some landscape photographers are only drawn to what is commonly known as photographic honey-pots; these are well known locations that have been taken by numerous other photographers and will undoubtedly have appeared in various photographic magazines and books. We can all see the appeal; success breeds success and if somebody else has been successful with a particular location, why not you? Often when approaching an over-photographed location, you already have a picture in mind, which is where things can go awry. Due to weather and lighting, these places never are quite the same as you had imagined and often photographers can be disappointed with their results when they compare their image with the one they saw published. Even if you do get a wonderfully illuminated example, the excitement is often short-lived. So, what is the solution: review your working practices.

When shooting landscape, the temptation is always to point the camera towards the horizon, but there is also merit in taking photographs which completely exclude the sky. If we develop this idea just a little further, we should be able to find worthwhile images down at our feet, or possibly in small nooks and crannies that are not normally considered rich pickings for photography.

Look carefully at seemingly inconsequential elements such as small clusters of flowers, formations of rocks, or marks in the sand and you will discover detail that can serve as a microcosm for the whole. Look for exciting colour combinations, rich textures or patterns, as these can provide the basis for the photograph. This can prove to be a deeply satisfying, almost contemplative approach to photography, as it requires that you work slowly. Once you find an area of interest, move cautiously, almost metre by metre, checking out potentially worthy bits of detail. Soon you will be enthralled in a world of the miniature.

The value of this kind of work is that it helps to define you as a photographer. With conventional landscape photography, it is very easy to follow others who have photographed the same area in the past. While one never intentionally aims to plagiarize, it is hard to ignore a particular vantage point if you know somebody else has enjoyed success from the same location. The great thing about the intimate landscape is that it is personal, as only you will have noticed it, but in order to be successful much will depend on your powers of observation, your understanding of the visual elements and your imagination.

Photographing the intimate landscape encourages individuality. Often the images you produce lack scale, but that merely adds to their interest. They will sometimes appear to lack depth, so having an appreciation of the graphic arts will help you spot potential subject matter. The essential thing is to be guided by your own judgment and aim to reduce the composition down to the simplest visual elements.

Our eyes are incredibly discriminating, and we are constantly seeing elements within the landscape we find visually exciting, but because they don't conform to the usual norms of landscape photography, it is easy to convince ourselves that they are not worth pursuing. Self-doubt really is the enemy. The aim of this workshop is to guide you through numerous photographic situations which you might otherwise ignore, and to show you that these locations are worth developing. The advantages of working this way are numerous; first, your chances for taking interesting landscapes are greatly increased. Once you appreciate that there are exciting opportunities virtually on your doorstep, then you cease dreaming about those places which might be many miles, or even continents away. Second, achieving a photographic style is the goal of many serious landscape workers, but this can only be achieved by "ploughing your own furrow". But the main advantage for developing a personal vision is that it greatly improves your sense of self-worth as a photographer. By embracing new ways of looking at the landscape, such as abstract photography, minimalism, or by assessing the potential of a given location on the merits of the constituent visual elements, your confidence in your own abilities is greatly increased. Once you start to trust your own capacity to identify and develop a particular setting, you can then begin to consider yourself a true "fine-art" landscape photographer. The aim of any serious landscape photographer should be to capture images that are unique to them; "The Intimate Landscape Workshop" is a guide to achieving this.

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***Adopt working practices that promote individuality;***

*1) Avoid Clichés:* whilst we may well visit honey-pot locations, learn to put your own spin on it.

*2) Looking to your feet*: what you see on the ground will be exclusive to you.

*3) Looking upward:* learn to create dynamic compositions by pointing your camera upwards

*4) Looking from a high vantage point;* identify wonderfully abstract elements*.*

*5) Exploring "intimacy" by reducing the depth of field.* Some of our most enigmatic landscapes can be created by using a very wide aperture.

*6) Capturing mood over content.* Understand that occasionally, despite the lack of obvious content, the mood of the landscape is sufficiently strong and should be pursued.

*7) Exploring the principle of chaotic beauty.* Some "tangled" landscapes retain a subliminal design which is worthy of capture

*8) Develop an appreciation of the abstract.* By developing an appreciation of the abstract, we learn to embrace new photographic opportunities

*9) Exploring Minimalism.* This is an established art principle which celebrates the idea that "less is more".

*10) Understand the concept of the miniature landscape.* By looking carefully, often we can identify miniature landscapes that are a parody of something much larger.

*11) Do I always need a focal point?* Obsessed with the "rule of thirds", some photographers miss great landscape opportunities, because they cannot see an obvious focal point.

*12) Understand how your choice of format can promote.* By using either the panoramic or the square formats, we are able to be more selective about which part of the landscape we wish to highlight.

*13) Identifying rhythm in the landscape.* Most landscape has a natural rhythm which is unique to that that specific location.

*14) Discover the mystical qualities of backlighting;* exploit the unique characteristics of sunlight.

*15) Explore the simple beauty of silhouettes.*

***Understanding your lenses.***

*1) The value of a telephoto lens.* The eye is amazingly discriminating and by using a long telephoto lens, we are able to isolate that part of the landscape that initially caught our attention.

2) *Shooting macro.* These lenses encourage us to slow down and view elements of the landscape that most photographers would pass by.

3) *Can I achieve an intimate landscape with a wide-angle lens?* Paradoxically yes you can, especially with a very wide-angle lens, as it is an encouragement to fill the foreground with detail that only you have noticed.

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***The Seasons.***

The seasons presents us with numerous opportunities for worthwhile intimate landscapes. This book will feature a range of interesting possible locations.

*1) Spring*

*2) Summer*

*3) Autumn*

*4) Winter*

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***Understanding visual elements.***

Simply put, the visual elements are those aspects that make up composition; being able to see these elements within the landscape is a helpful way of composing our pictures relative to our own personal vision.

*1) Colour.*

*2) Tonal values*

*3) Line.*

*4) Identifying shape.*

*5) Identifying patterns.*

*6) Exploring texture*

*7) Playing with scale.*

*8) Seeking out the arabesque*. This is a specific design principle often applied to graphic design which can also feature in some aspects of landscape.

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***Exploiting the ambient Weather conditions.***

Together with light, weather is the element that defines the character of landscape and is an essential ingredient in the pursuit of a personal style. In this section, we will learn how to predict these conditions and also how to exploit their unique aesthetic appeal.

*1) Frost.*

*2) Gentle Rain.*

*3) The effect of mist on landscape.*

*4) Ice.*

*5) The graphic effects of snow*

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***Interesting locations you may wish to consider.***

*1) The beach.*

*2) Rock-pools.*

*3) Rocky coastline.*

*4) Where the sea meets the shore; the intertidal zone.*

*5) The single rock.*

*6) Patterns in the sand.*

*7) The splendour of the crashing wave.*

*8) Canyons; a detailed study of rock*

*9) Sand-dunes*

*10) The Graphic Beauty Of Empty fields.*

*11) Floral pastures.*

*13) Skeletal Trees.*

*14) The marks of man.*

*15) Man-made landscapes*

*16) A close-up of plants*

*17) The awesome beauty of clouds.*

*18) Flowing water.*

*19) The beauty of ponds.*

*20) Water flowing over rocks.*

*21) Waterfalls in detail.*

*22) Water-lilies.*

*23) The abstract beauty of estuaries.*

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**Editing post-camera.**

1) *The advantages of shooting RAW.* It is important to emphasise that good landscape should be about honest capture, and there shouldn't be too much need for post-editing, however what the eye and brain saw is not always reflected on what we see on the screen and sometimes the odd tweak in the Raw Convertor or Lightroom can prove useful.

*2) Experimenting with multiple exposure.* Occasionally a landscape can be enhanced by creating a double exposure, particularly if the capture is from the same source. This can be done in-camera or alternatively post-camera using editing software.

*3) Grouping like images together.* Newcomers to this genre of landscape photography are sometimes unsure of what they have achieved; the results perhaps appear too sparse. Confidence in one's work can be increased by grouping various similar images into a single file.

*4) The allure of mono.* Sometimes a digital capture can be improved by converting the image from colour into monochrome. The merits of this will be discussed.