

## Tripping The Light Fantastic

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**Photography is the act of recording light on film or digital sensors.** Photographs of the natural world, whether it's a grand landscape or intimate portrait of a butterfly, is a means of communicating our love of nature and wild places while creating a sense of awe and wonder in the viewer.

For many years I have traveled to some of the most breathtakingly beautiful places in the United States in order to capture wild landscapes and intimate details of nature. I was originally a 35mm and medium-format film user, but two years ago I bought my first DSLR and found my creative vision flourishing and evolving in ways it never had before. The ability to view images immediately while exposing an unlimited number of images at no cost has allowed me to push the creative envelope.

A few years back, I picked up a Georgia O'Keeffe retrospective of simple and abstract paintings from the Ghost Ranch in New Mexico. I was so amazed by her work that I decided I wanted to produce and play with the art of creating impressionistic and abstract images of the natural world. Following are a few techniques that I have learned along the way to help you photograph abstract images of trees, water, reflections or anything that interests you.

### The Art Of Observation

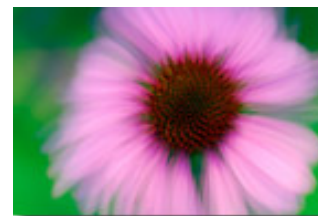
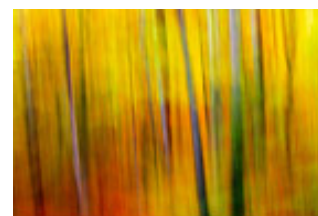
You cannot make a photograph if you do not see it. Simply put, a photograph as a form of art needs to be more than a simple snapshot of the landscape. Composition, light, angle, perspective and subject matter must be considered before tripping the shutter. These rules are very important when creating abstract imagery and impressionistic photographs. A simple curve, repeating shapes, or complimentary colors can be the key to producing stunning abstract images. When out shooting, make sure to look beyond what is directly in front of you for repeating shapes such as the trunks of trees or scattering of leaves across a pool of water. The art of seeing is an act of deep contemplation and study. Explore, sit down, and take in all of your surroundings before beginning to make photographs. The use of a digital camera will help you to immediately view your images and quickly make changes, re-compose or adjust your exposure.

### Techniques For Creating Abstract Images

I use the Nikon D2X and D200 digital cameras, which both have two key features for creating abstract images built right into the software – the image overlay and multiple exposure functions. These are the two tools I employ most often when creating the bulk of my abstract images. Film shooters may create stunning multiple exposure abstracts as long as their camera offers a multiple exposure function. Almost all pro and advanced amateur models will have this feature built into the camera. With my Nikon D2X and D200 models, there is an auto gain option, which instructs the camera to automatically compensate the exposure for each frame recorded. If you are shooting with a film SLR, you will have to apply the exposure calculations manually. It's really not so difficult. For example, if you are creating a double exposure overlay where one image is focused sharp and the next de-focused slightly producing a soft dreamy effect, set the exposure at 1 stop under the meter's recommendation. If your camera's meter reads the light at 1/30th at f11 then you will want to set your shutter speed at 1/60th of a second at f11 for each exposure. Its very easy to do, but I would still recommend bracketing your shots and keeping good notes for the your first few sessions.

### Go With The Flow

Swirling, panning, and zooming are three additional techniques I like to use when creating abstract images. Panning the camera up



and down for vertical subjects or left to right for horizontal subjects is a great way to produce truly impressionistic photographs. Swirling is the act of moving the camera in a semicircle around the subject. Remember to keep your main center of interest at the same point throughout the movement. The use of a tripod and lens with a rotating tripod collar is the best setup for this technique. When creating multiple zoom images, it is essential to have your camera mounted on a tripod. Remember to refocus on the subject after each zoom exposure.

### Guidelines For Successful Abstract Images

1. Use a sturdy Tripod.
2. Use your camera's grid screen for careful subject placement and straight horizons.
3. Shoot in soft overcast, shade or at twilight.
4. Use complimentary colors.
5. Film shooters should always bracket their images.
6. Combine techniques such as zooming and panning at the same time.

Remember these rules and you will be well on your way to creating stunning images. Always remember to push your creative limitations. Try photographic techniques, angles, or subjects you normally might not try. A mediocre subject will probably produce a mediocre photograph so these techniques should not be the solution for inferior subject matter. These techniques will help you to grow as a photographer and help create new and fresh images for your portfolio.

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**Joseph Rossbach** is a professional landscape and nature photographer based out of Annapolis, Maryland. Over the past ten years, he has traveled into some of the most beautiful and remote areas of the United States in order to capture the American landscape. His images have appeared in local and regional magazines, calenders, advertising campaigns, websites and in books and art galleries and corporate collections. To see more of Joseph's images visit his website at [www.josephrossbach.com](http://www.josephrossbach.com).



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