

Making Lemonade out of Lemons

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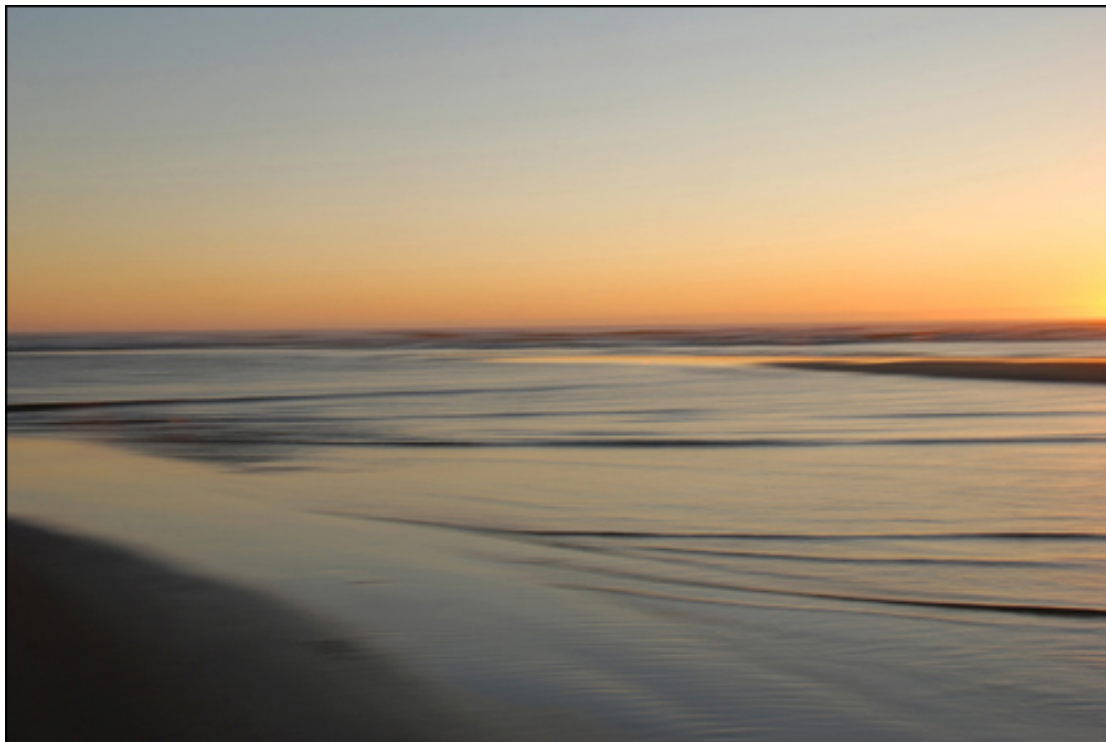
How many times have you seen a gorgeous, dramatic sunset photograph from the Oregon Coast? How badly did you want an image like that also? You plan and research the best places to be for that sunset. You're sure to have all the right equipment-camera, tripod, wide angle to telephoto lenses, split ND filter, polarizer and perhaps some other filters and equipment. You rent the car, make hotel reservations and check out the best local eateries. You pack, check, and double check. Everything is good to go. I'm off and flying!

In August 2007, I landed in Oregon and took off in my rental car for a week of high anticipation of sunsets (and other images). I couldn't wait to drive to all my destinations and shoot my dream ocean shots. Being from the Midwest, I crave my "once a year at the ocean" somewhere!

Oh no! The six days and nights I spent in Oregon were less than dramatic. No fabulous clouds, no fog for mood - just dull, boring skies with little color at sunset. What do you do? Make lemonade out of lemons! Rather than coming away with boring images, I decided to be a bit creative and "paint" with my camera. After all, I had flown half way across the country and I was determined to come home with some worthwhile images as this would be my only opportunity.

Panning is certainly not a new concept, but it is one that can be used for a different perspective on a subject. I find that panning is most effective when shooting horizontal or vertical images that have a graphic, linear, simple design or format, such as ocean horizons or trees. I also wanted to present a good balance of dark and light forms. Color balance was equally important.

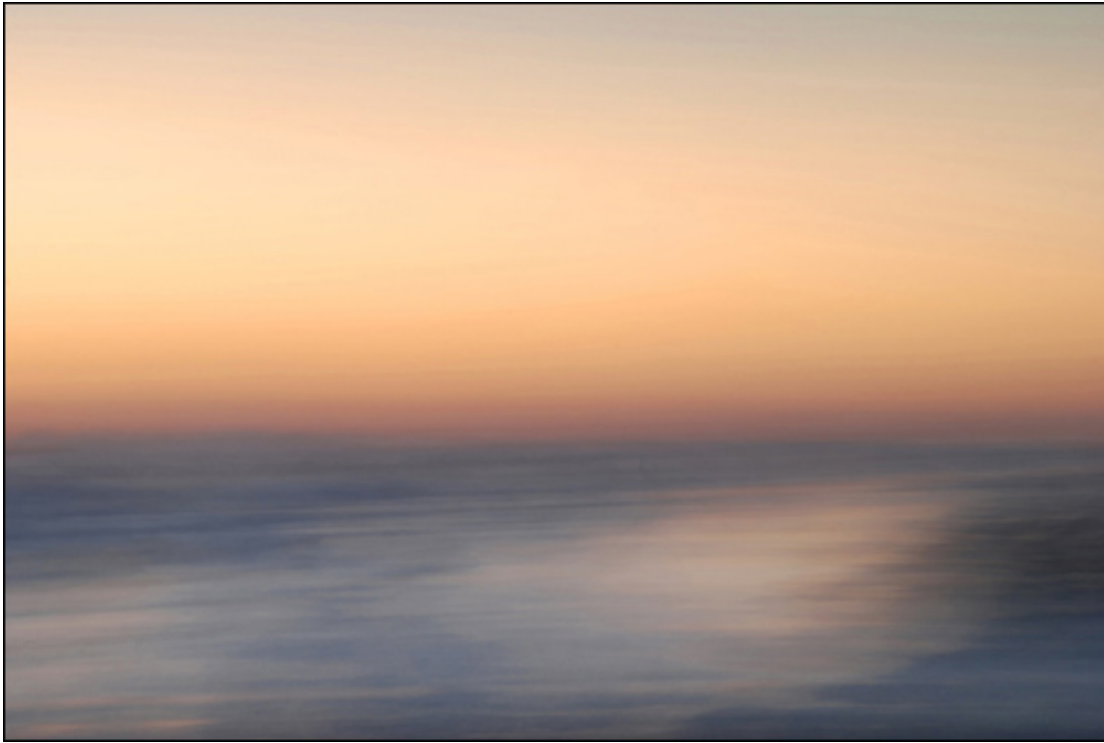
Here are some examples that I captured from that trip:



Silky Sunset

I shot this at low tide. Using a long exposure at f32, I took my camera off my tripod and hugged the camera close to my face.

Slowly moving my body from left to right, I panned the ocean hitting the shutter button and releasing after I had finished the pan.



Watercolor Sunset

There was a slight sunset reflection in the waters and I envisioned a watercolor painting. Again using a long exposure, I panned left to right to create the painting.



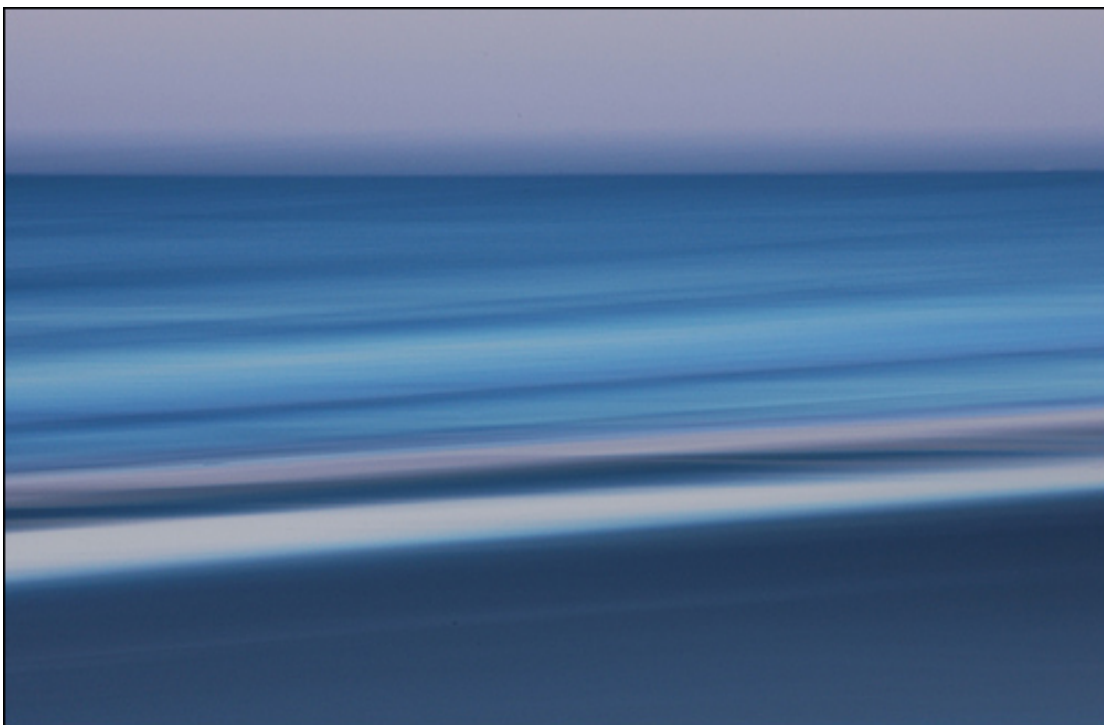
Streaking

The sun was right at the horizon about to go below. I panned left to right but also moved my camera up a bit at the end to create a streak in the sky. I was pleased to see the streak had also been captured in the water reflection.



Sea Ghosts

I spent two nights at Cannon Beach. The first night was a total bust, with clouds and rain enshrouding the rocks. The second night was slightly better, with a very muted pink in the sky as the sun was setting. So once again, I got creative. I envisioned a “ghostly” appearance of the haystacks with the muted colors.



Blue Eve

I've learned over the years that after the sun goes down below the horizon, there are images yet to be taken. After the sun had set, the blues and purples hues came to life. Once again, I started to "paint" the scene.

While I also made some conventional, sharp ocean images as well, the panning shots were my favorites. I came away that week a better photographer because I let go of preconceived shots that never materialized. I learned how to make lemonade out of lemons and while doing so, I enjoyed my own interpretation of the Oregon Coast. I left Oregon with a smile. It had been a fun trip after all!

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Beth Summer is a self-taught photographer of seven years residing in Illinois. More of Beth's work can be seen at her website, www.bethsummer.smugmug.com.



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