

# Blurring the Lines

*Photographic proof that reality is just an illusion*

**Paula Apro**  
Photographer



When did I become an artist? That's a title that I always wanted to have, but never felt I deserved. I always believed that artists have to use their hands to create beautiful works. I was not born with the innate ability to draw or paint, but still the desire to create beautiful things burned on inside me. It was about 15 years ago that I stopped calling myself a "Graphic Designer" and instead adopted the term "Digital Artist." I feel that new title inspired me to reach further and explore my creativity on a deeper level. From the time I was a child in grade school I was obsessed with taking photos. I never really knew what I loved so much about it back then, but today I do.

Everywhere I go I'm composing photos, even when there is no camera in my hand. Searching for great shots makes you see the world differently. You notice things that you wouldn't normally even see. I'm captivated by light and shadows, textures and colors, and how they all play off each other. When you notice these small details everyday, everywhere you go, it enriches your life.

I'm passionate about finding art in everyday objects. I love taking the time to see these objects in a completely different way. I can lose sight of the object itself and transform it into something completely different with the magical powers of my camera. My camera has become an extension of me and it is my vehicle to capture and create the art that my mind sees.

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Photographer / Digital Artist

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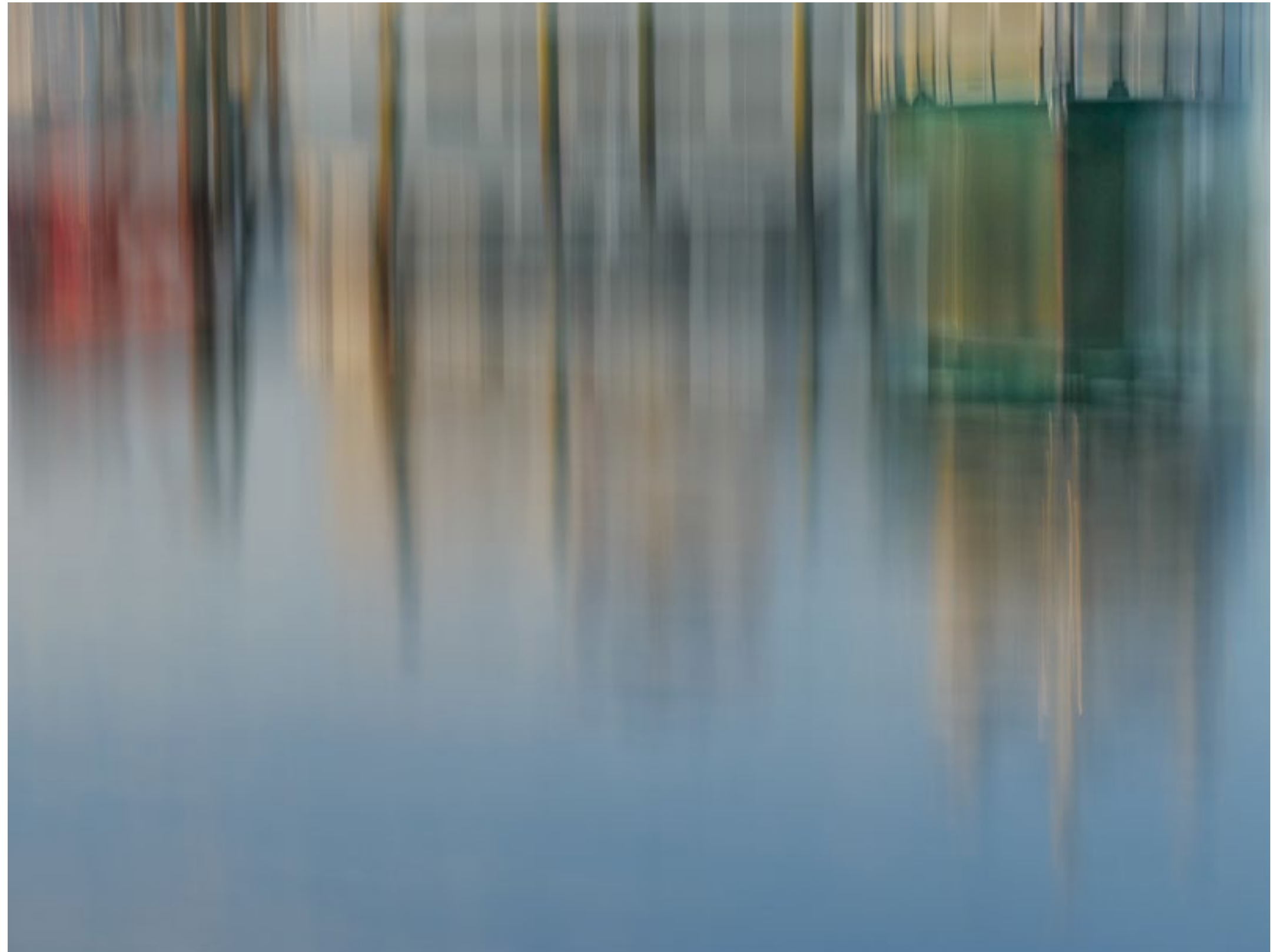
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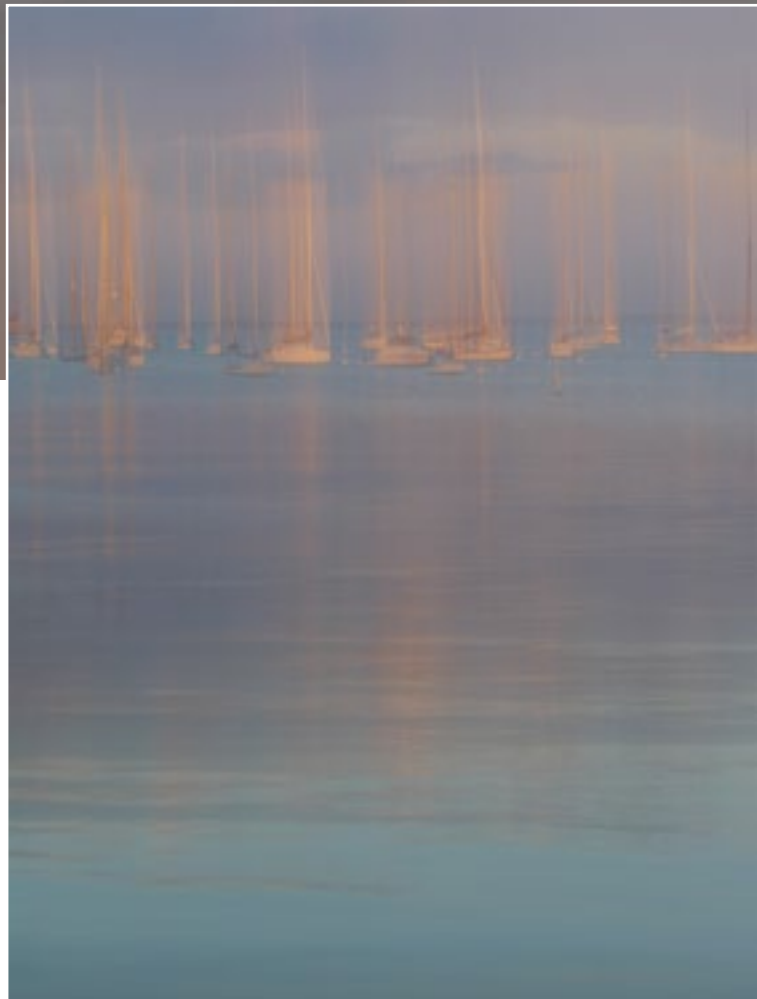
Rockland, Maine USA

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## Blurring the Lines

**T**his book explores the fine line between reality and fantasy. These photographs illustrate how the line that separates the two is often blurred and it's hard to distinguish what we see versus what we perceive as real. Is reality just an illusion? Do we all see the same thing? These photographs are living proof that it's not just what you're looking at that determines your reality, but rather it's what you see. If you spend time looking until you perceive new unexpected things, you will start to see things that others don't. It is possible to create your own beautiful reality. It's up to you what you create, so why not create something beautiful?





*Photo left: Rockland Harbor at dusk.*

*Photo above: Exact same harbour shot at the exact same time. Sail boats were magically erased simply by panning the camera with a long exposure.*

## My Story

I have a fascination with capturing, altering, and defining reality. What exactly is reality? Is it the same from one person to another? Two people can stand in front of the exact same scene and see completely different things. A person's personal viewpoint or personal reality completely affects and dictates what they see. On a deeper level of trying to define reality, science tells us that everything in the universe is made up of energy. Nothing is solid, but rather what appears to be solid is just moving particles of energy. Our brains use our past experiences as a filter to help us formulate a picture of what we are looking at. If we see something that our eyes and brains have never seen before we don't know exactly how to process it and it is very likely that our inexperienced eyes would see something quite different from somebody with prior experience with the subject being viewed. If we can train ourselves to view the world, as if for the first time, with fresh new eyes it would be much easier to look past the obvious and let our imaginations run wild.



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Photographers all look at and interpret what they are shooting with their own unique style. This is the art of photography – stamping your own signature on everything you shoot. A photographer's unique style is a reflection of their own personal reality or even their own personality. Just like meeting people in real life, they are all different, some more quirky and interesting than others. There is so much more under the clothing, the skin, the name, the title, the surface. Somebody's true nature is reflected by their personality and it is a big challenge to find and express your photographic "personality" otherwise known as your style. What do your photographs say about who you are?

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In my journey of finding my own unique photographic personality it is very evident that my fascination with quantum mechanics comes into play. Reality is what you make of it. Your brain has the power to create any reality that you want. In real life I would call this "enlightenment" and that doesn't happen overnight. It takes a lot of time and effort to quiet the mind and look within. The more still your body and mind get, the more you start to see and hear things that you haven't seen nor heard before. You begin to discover your creative self and hear your inner voice that guides you on your life path.

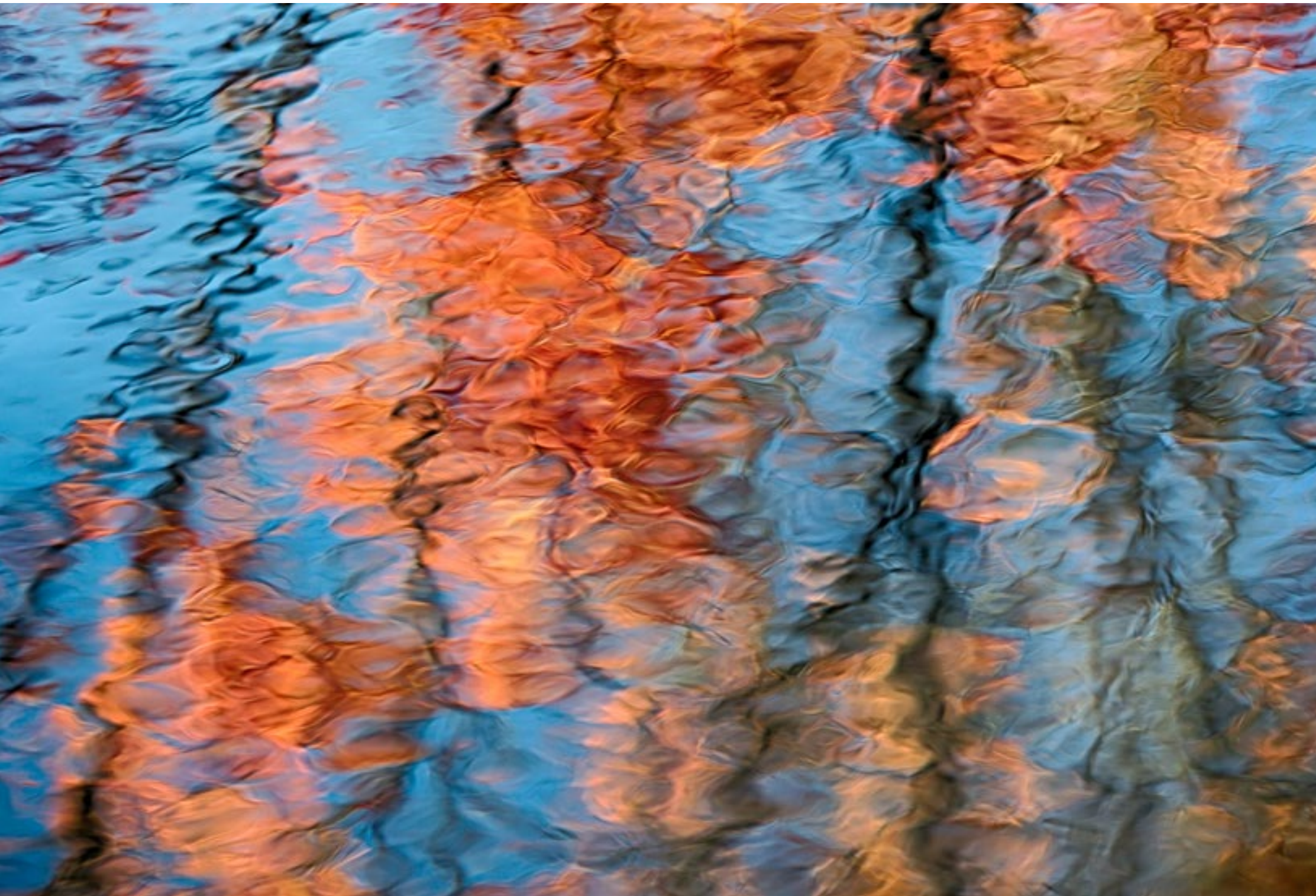


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Everything presented to you in life can have multiple outcomes. Every situation can be viewed from different viewpoints and you can go in multiple different directions. Nothing is absolute and anything is possible. The same holds true for photography. You can look at an object or a scene and only see what's on the surface or you can explore new options. Many people don't realize this. They just accept their first reaction and don't try to look for alternate possibilities or see a deeper meaning. In this instance, photographers may take out their camera and just shoot or document exactly what they perceive as the obvious reality in front of them, be it good or bad in their mind's eye. But with a little more effort, time, and patience they may be able to alter this reality and start to perceive something more pleasant. The glass can always be half full.







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In order to see and create an alternate photographic reality I believe it takes some of the same mental diligence. You may come across a scene that doesn't appear as you might have hoped. Just like in life, many different outcomes are possible. Things are not always what they seem and when you change your point of view, change your mind, or change your personal reality you can create beautiful things from seemingly nothing. A camera and your open mind are all that are required to create a beautiful new reality.

My camera has become a magical tool to bend the universe and my passion has become training my brain to see all the potential life has to offer. I will continue to experiment until I create a reality that I love.

If there is one thing that my own personality demands, it is to be different. My goal is to see and present the world in unique and inspiring ways in hopes that it inspires others to try to open their minds and eyes to the endless potentials in this vast world.

*Please note that all photos shown in this book have not been digitally edited outside of slight cropping or saturation boost. For the most part these images are straight out of the camera.*





## Tequila Sunset

These were the first two photos that launched me down the rabbit hole of altering reality. I set out to photograph the sunset, but I really didn't have a location scouted out with a view of the horizon. I knew it would be a long shot of finding a good scene and just as I suspected, my expectations were met. I ended up on a golf course in Mexico with not much to photograph. That's always when I get the most creative, when I have to dig deep to find something to point my camera at.

The setting sun was throwing off a beautiful golden light and I decided to get up close to the long variegated leaves of an agave plant. Since the plant itself wasn't all that interesting, I decided to set my camera to a long exposure and play with the light falling on the plant. I didn't really have something in my mind that I expected as a result so really, there was no way to fail.

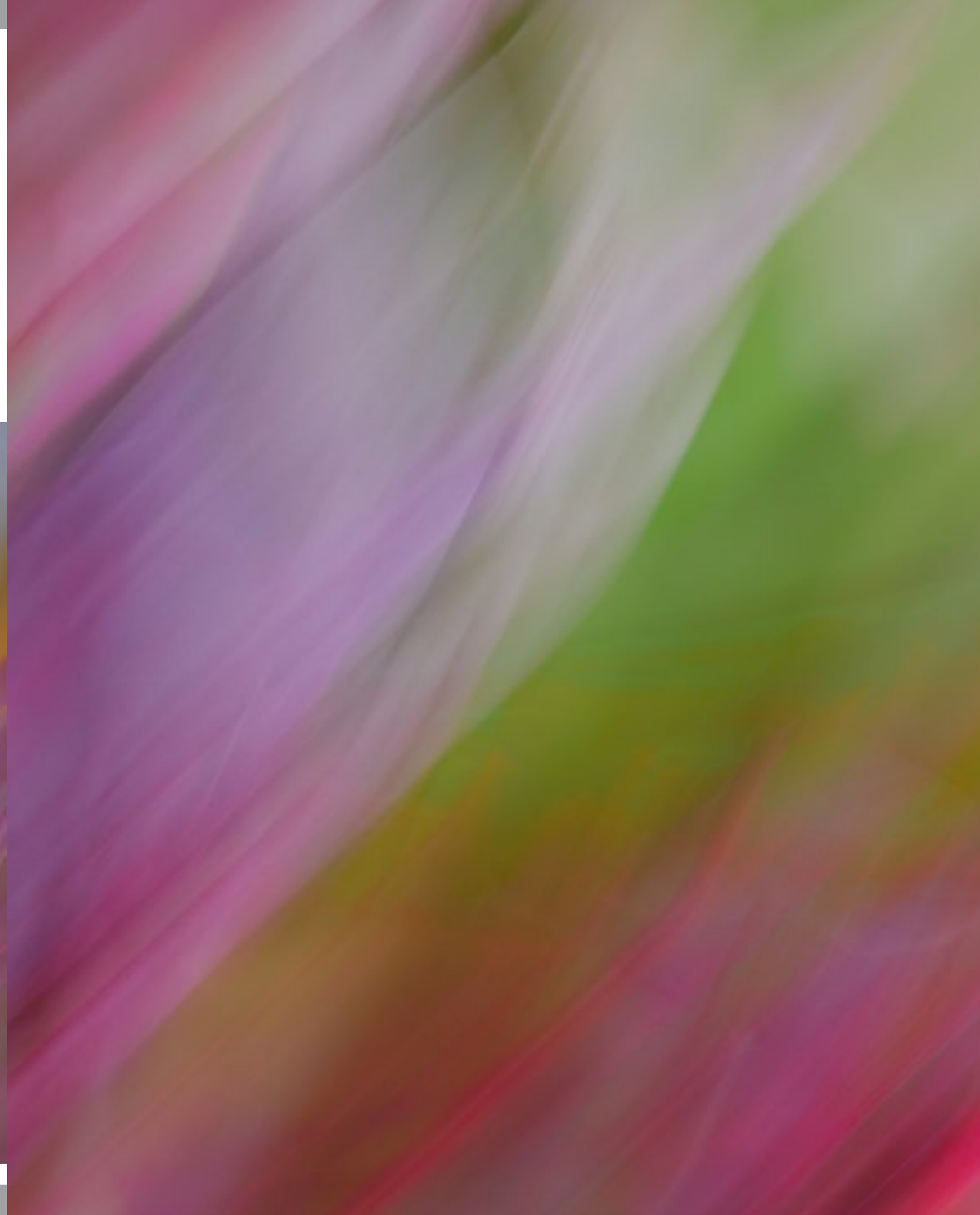
Within one or two of my first clicks of the shutter I achieved amazing results and the images blew me away. I was hooked! I admit that this was beginner's luck because I didn't have the intention of creating images like these, but it was one of the best things that I have ever 'stumbled across' and it completely changed the course of my photographic journey.



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## Flames of Passion

Light and color go together like milk and an Oreo® cookie and they are just as delicious. These two photos were taken in a decaying garden at the beginning of October. Just about everything was starting to die, but there were small hints of color remaining. To take photos of the actual half-dead flowers probably would not have resulted in the same vibrant stunning images as the ones shown here. It doesn't take much more than a spot of color to paint with your camera.







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## Rings of Light

Imagine standing in front of a colorful scene, any colorful scene, and using your mind to blend all the colors together. After all, light is just energy and energy is moving by its very nature. Matching the movement of the natural energy with the movement of the camera gives you this very ability to blend those colors and shapes together. The camera becomes the paint brush and the world becomes your canvas!



These photos are great examples of light and color. The actual subject matter is completely unrecognizable. These colorful rings shown above are purple and orange flowers on the side of a bright green lawn. The flowers were being harshly lit by the setting sun and I was able to use that light to paint the rings of color with the moving camera. The photo to the right is the same concept of harsh light being cast onto a green plant. The white rings are the spots where more light is concentrated.







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## Fields of Gold

Much of my recent work has been influenced by the desire to learn how to paint. I long to be able to spread paint around a canvas with such precision that the result resembles some form of reality. Funny, how I strive to ensure that my photographs don't look too realistic. I'm trying to find the grey area between the two worlds where reality meets fantasy and blend my two artistic interests.

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## Indoor Landscape

By moving my camera during exposure I often try to create a painterly look found in the loose representation of watercolors. This particular photo was taken from the window during a stormy day. The water and ice on the window helped to create the desired effect. This was a true win-win. The wet window gave me the exact result I was looking for, and I got to stay warm and dry!



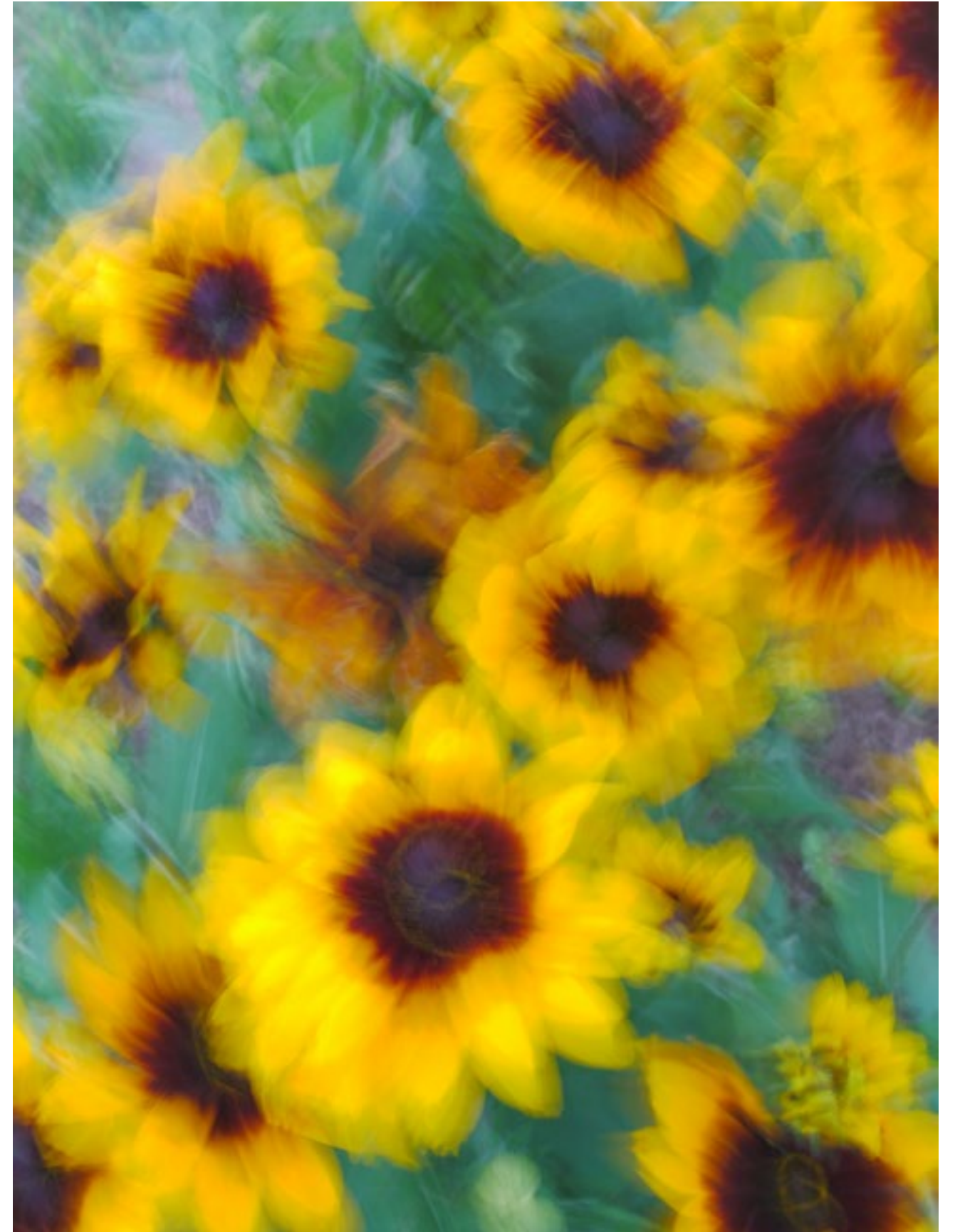




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## Dancing Daisies

Flowers and nature lend themselves so nicely to this type of soft and fluid imagery. Out in nature flowers are almost never standing perfectly still, but rather they spend most of their time dancing and swaying in the wind. I quickly realized that I don't have to wait for that perfect gust of wind to blow at just the right speed. I have a camera in my hand and I can create any wind speed that I want, and that is exactly what I did. My long exposure and camera movement brought these daisies to life in a beautiful ballet of motion.



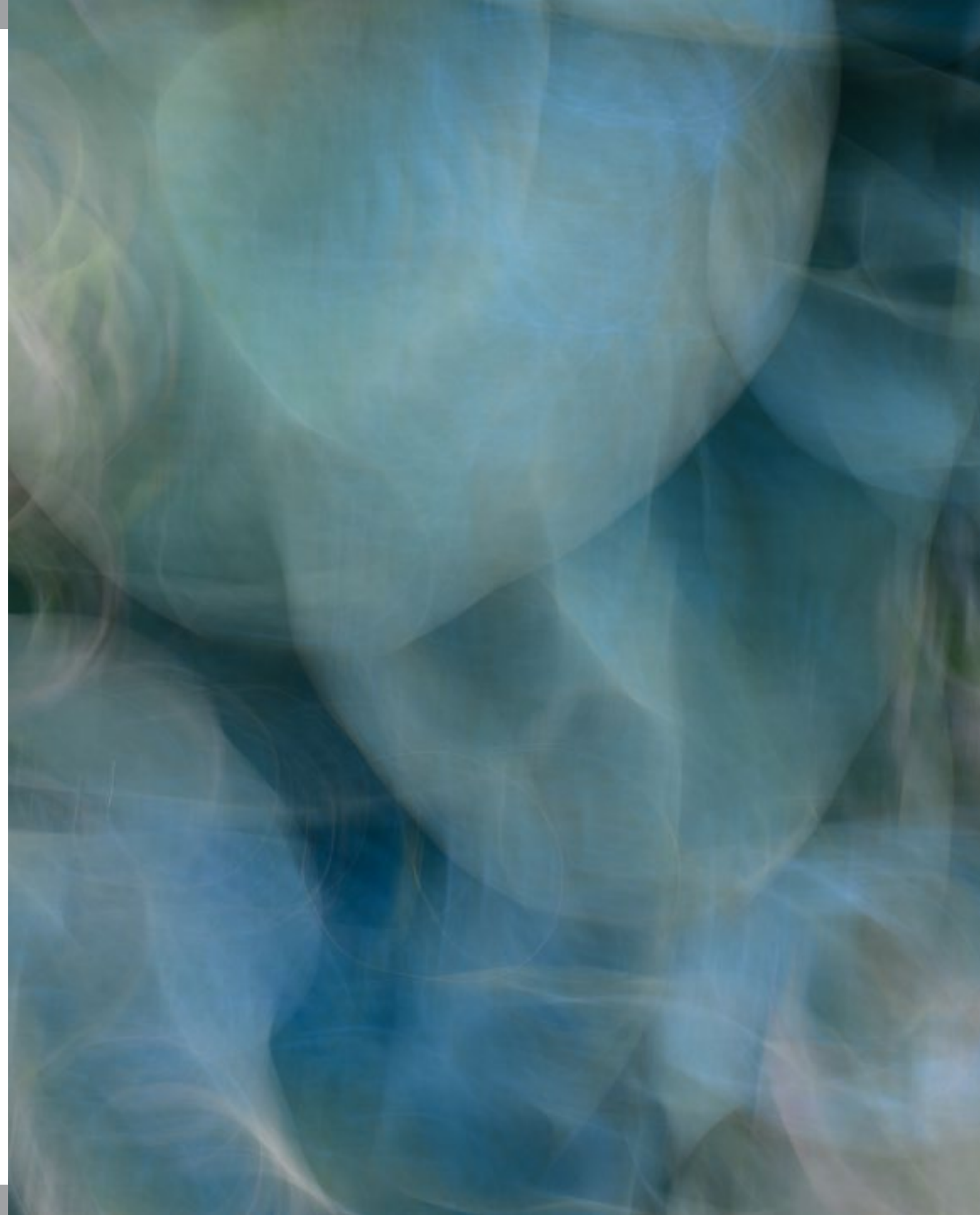
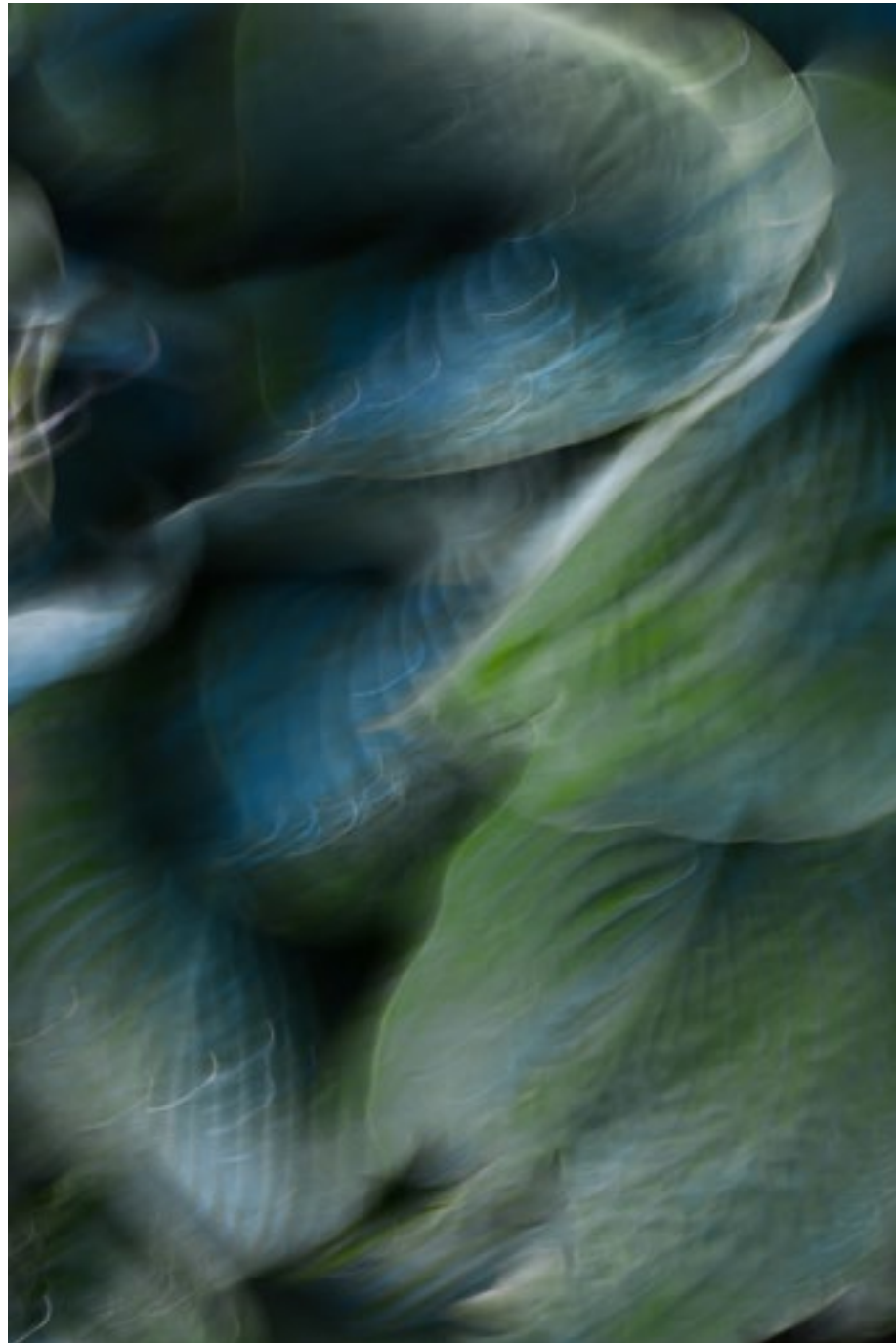


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## Alternate Reality

Since flowers worked so nicely, the next logical step was to try some leaves. These hosta plants weren't really all that attractive in their natural beauty, but by adding a little moving whimsy to them they gained a much more dynamic personality. Sprinkling on a bit of fairy dust makes the scene a little more dreamy.

Sometimes you only need a little bit of fairy dust, and sometimes you need a lot (as shown in the photo to the right). Many images require some imagination on the viewers' part to decide and determine what they are looking at - or think they are looking at. It doesn't really matter because it's not what you look at that's important, but rather what you see. Sometimes the subject itself isn't important at all because it's just about the color. Whether it is pretty leaves in nature or trash along the roadside, if you have light and color those two ingredients are all you need to create a virtual reality photo.





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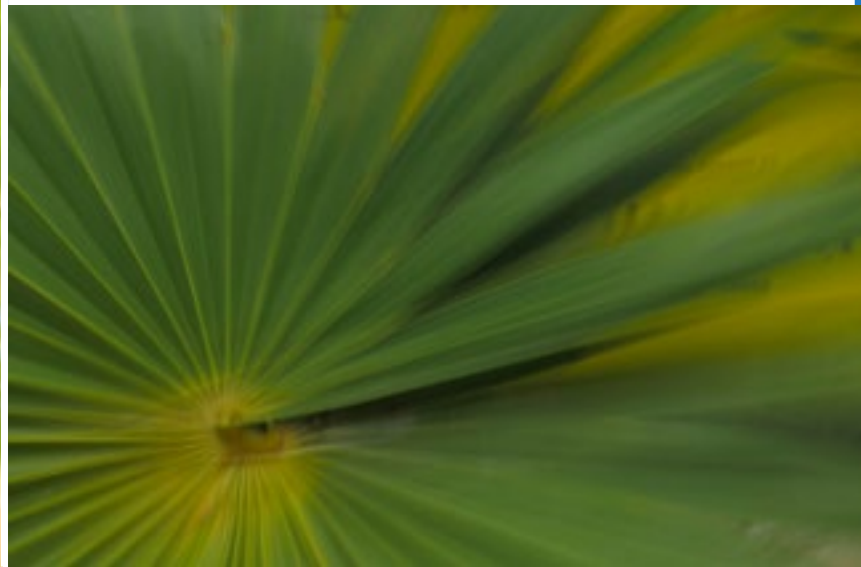
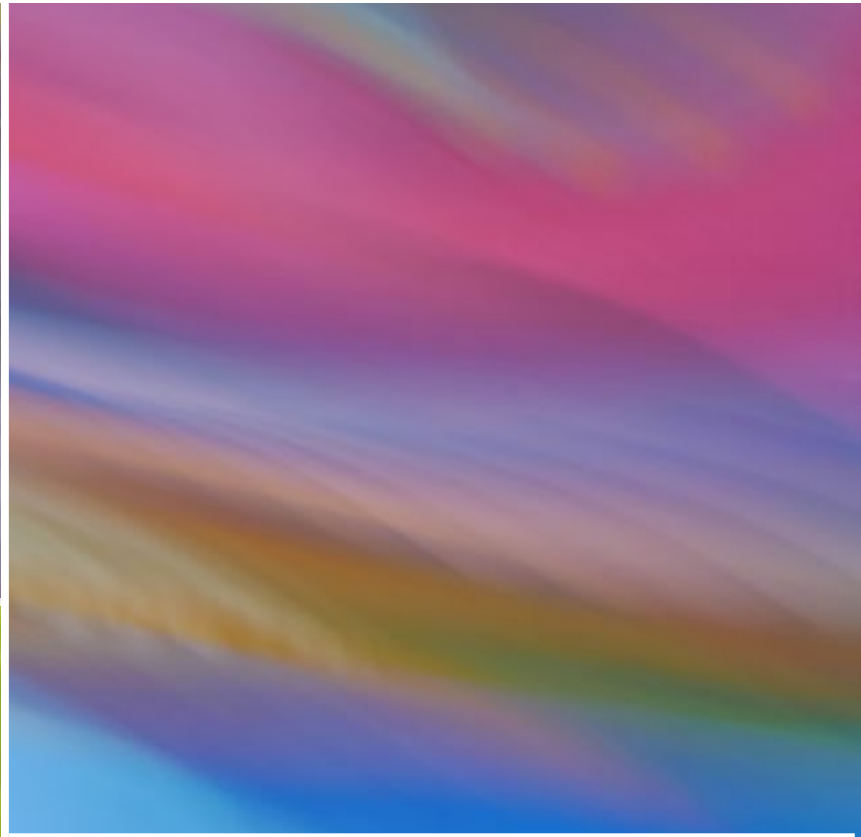
## Ghost Ship

This boat was docked at the harbor and surrounded by a rather hum drum environment, but using the magic of my camera I completely transformed the scene. A small boat went from standing still at the dock to becoming a large ship under full steam on the ocean of dreams.

The subjects of the photos on the opposite page were actually moving, but were shot in such a way that their motion was exaggerated to soften the look and increase the interest.









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## A Focus on Focus

Although camera movement is my favorite method to create altered reality effects, it's not the only way. Another great way to do this is with focus. By purposefully allowing your subject to fall out of focus you can achieve very soft, almost painterly appearance making it hard to distinguish between a photograph and a painting. The daisy photograph on the page to the right could be a painting just as easily as it can be a photograph.





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## Soft and Dreamy

Out of focus images tend to be softer on the eyes. Even bright or harsh lighting conditions can feel more relaxing and soothing. It's funny how bright spots of light in an otherwise dark scene will usually ruin a photo. The eye is always drawn to the brightest spot. So why not make the harsh light the subject of the photo using what is known as the Bokeh effect? Purposefully letting the spots of light go out of focus transforms the harsh rays into soft and dreamy light orbs. Just another example of how you can change your reality. You can take an otherwise negative situation and make the most of it. Change what you see and your reality follows.





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## Manual Mode

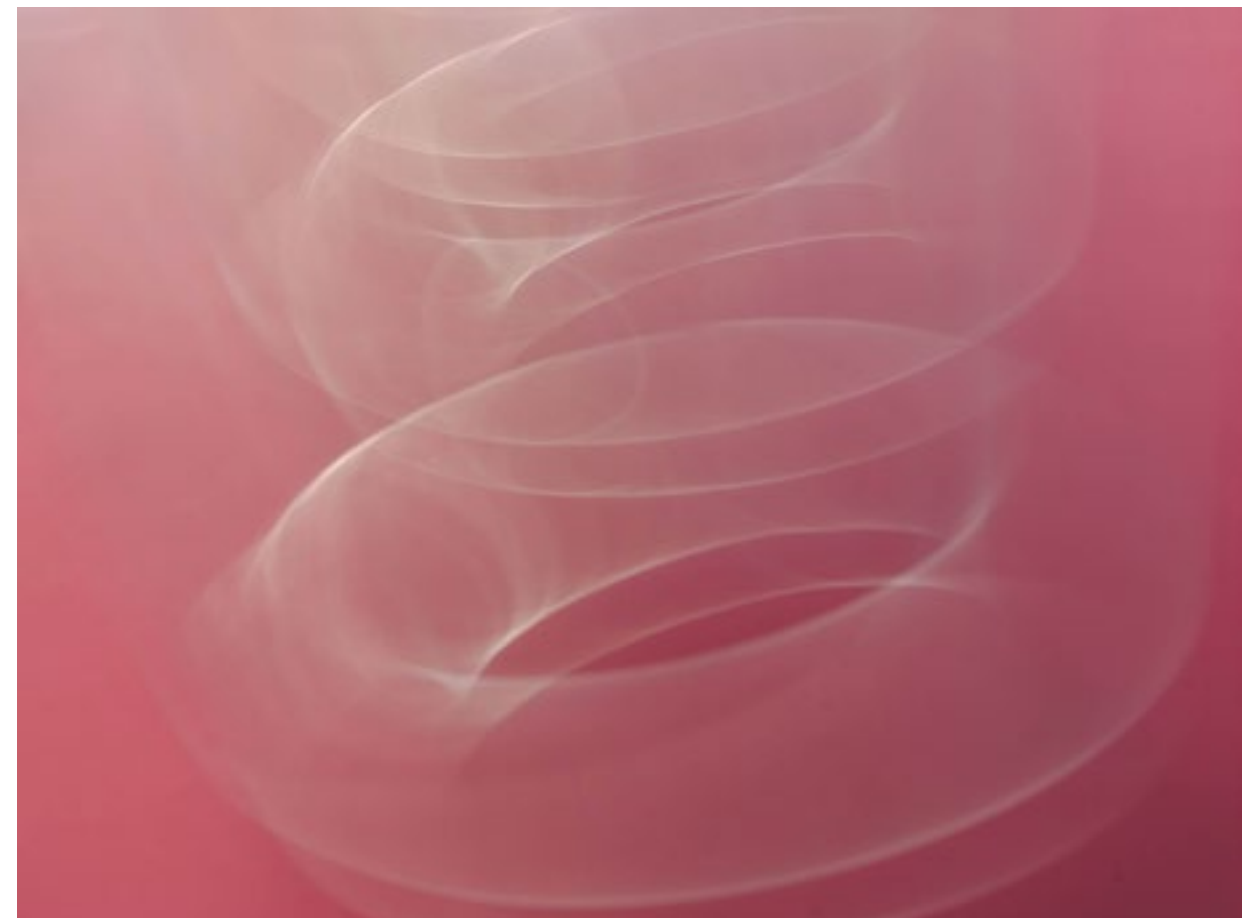
Focus is such a great topic when exploring ways of altering reality. When it comes right down to it, focus is everything. Whatever you put your focus on becomes your reality, be it positive or negative. Where your attention goes your energy goes, so dwelling on the negative paints your reality as dark and dreary. But you really do have the power to change this. Just as you can flip a switch on your lens and enter into manual focusing, you can take control over your attention. When you put your lens up close to objects and start to view the details, it takes time and patience before you discover the perfect composition or the most interesting area of an object. It doesn't just magically jump out at you. You really have to be mindful and look hard for it in order to get a beautiful shot.

Life is very similar. Just opening your eyes to your immediate reality may seem like a let down. The clouds may have taken over and the situation is not going the way you hoped or intended. Life never seems to happen just as you want it to and that's the time to flip your brain into manual mode. Our cameras, and our brains, are sophisticated machines each programmed for optimal efficiency. The cameras are set to expose for neutral gray because, in most lighting conditions, that will produce the best results. But let's face it, we often encounter situations outside of the norm which requires us to override the pre-programmed settings. Sometimes we need to dig deeper and take control of all the aspects of the picture making process.

Just like our cameras, our brains are programmed to run our bodies in the most efficient way. This means that much of what we think and do are on auto-pilot. It's almost as if our brains are always trying to expose for neutral gray. Just keep in mind that we also have the power to flip the switch on our brains into manual mode. We can break out of automatic program mode and take control of what we focus on. We change our lenses and therefore our perspectives. We can keep searching until we find and appreciate the beauty that is all around us. Never settle for anything less.

If you have this book and have gotten this far I just want to thank you for sharing in this photographic journey through my eyes. I hope you enjoyed the ride!

*Photo top right: Looking down into a swimming pool with a soft focus and slightly long exposure. Camera was still camera with gently moving water. Photo bottom right: The rings of drinking glasses turned upside down on a table, out of focus with camera movement.*



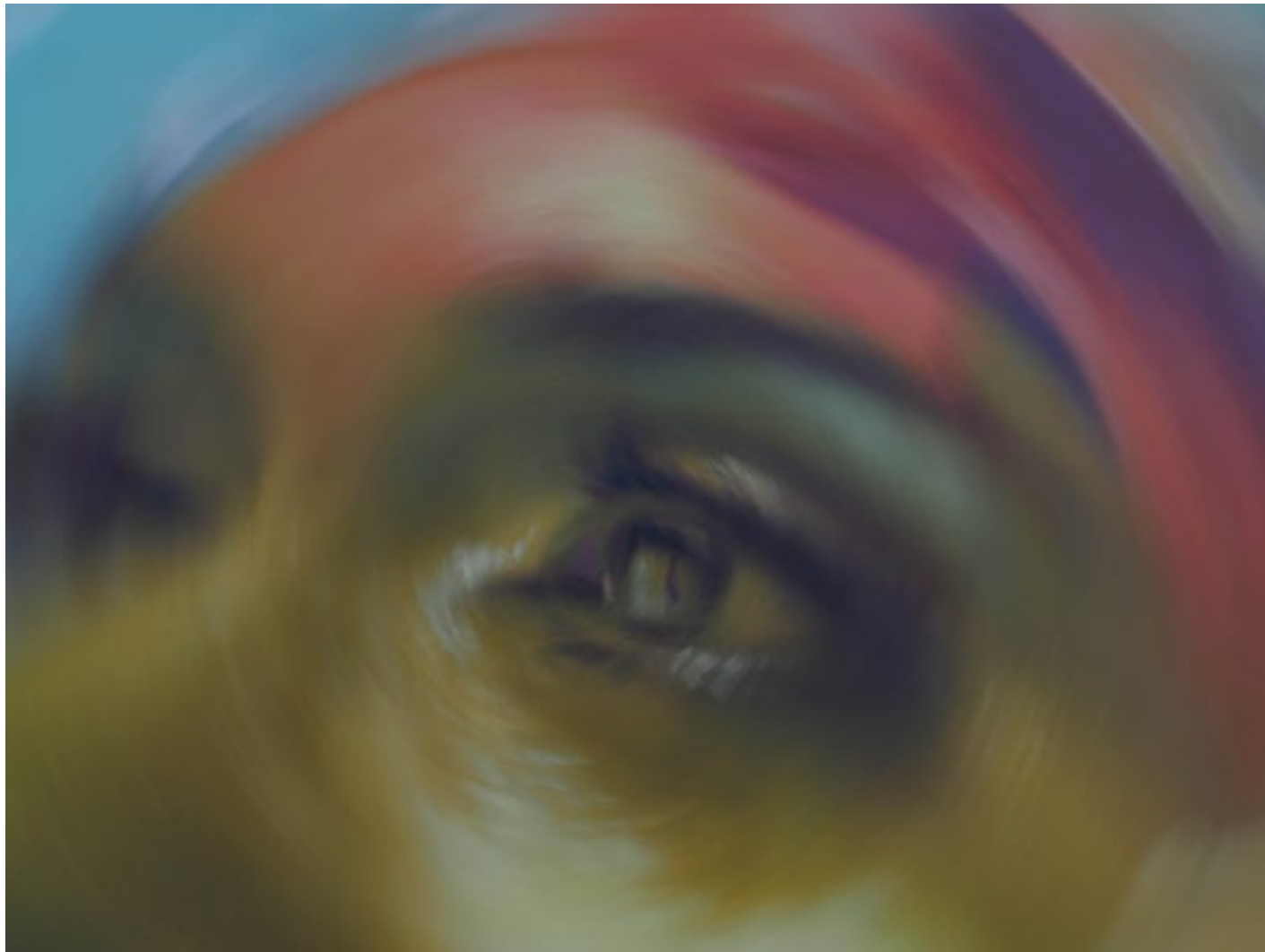
I recently attended a photography workshop taught by one of my favorite photographers, Eddie Soloway, and during that time I not only got inspired by his work, but he also encouraged me to write a "Haiku." A Haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry and it consists of three lines. The first and last lines of a Haiku have five syllables and the middle line has seven syllables. I never heard of a Haiku before and I never read nor appreciated poetry so it was a very big stretch for me to attempt to write a poem. It turned out to be an amazing experience to try to match words to my photos. It really made me stop to think about each photo and what thoughts or feelings I had by looking at it. Every good photo should evoke an emotion and this exercise really illustrated that fact. If no thoughts or emotions came up to fuel the poem, perhaps the photo wasn't as good as I thought it was.

## My First Haiku

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Move into stillness  
all the answers are inside  
close your eyes to see.





*It's not what you look at that matters,  
it's what you see.*

~ Henry David Thoreau

