C&V

SAFARI A MONOGRAPH

THE PRINT & THE PROCESS SERIES

DAVID DUCHEMIN

THE PREMISE

In January 2009 I found myself back in Nairobi with my Stormcase, a duffle bag, and two carry-ons with way too much gear. I'd been here before, in and out a couple of times on my way to one location or another for clients like World Vision Canada. But this time I had big glass, and I was heading out on my first safari to photograph animals I'd been in love with—but never seen—since I was a child.

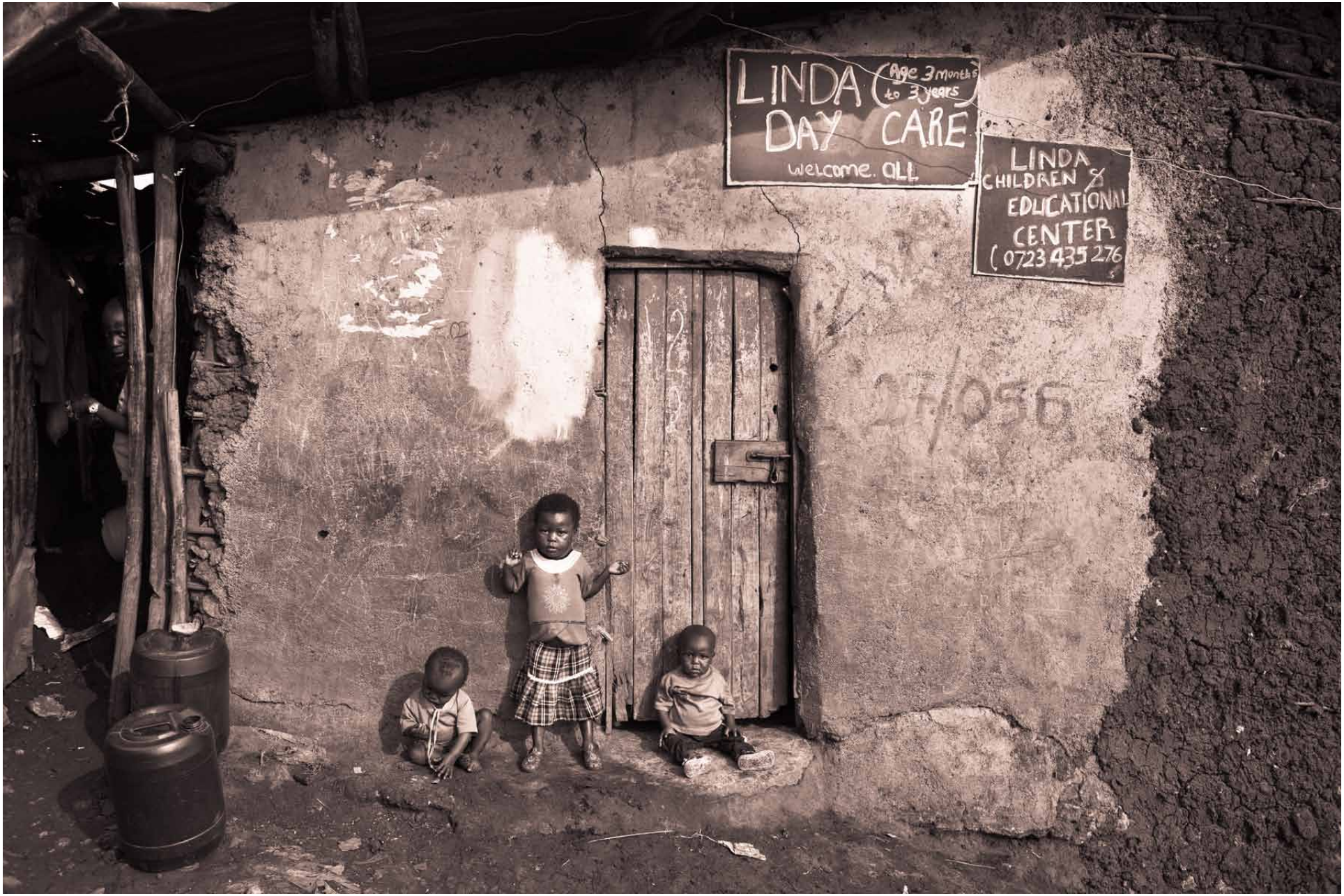
I was there as the special guest and photography instructor on a socially responsible safari run by Ryan Snider, a safari guide who has since become a good friend. We would spend 10 days with a group of photographers, from absolute beginners to enthusiasts with big glass. I was more nervous about this work than any assignment I'd ever been on, with the possible exception of my first, which was in Democratic Republic of Congo.

For the record, I am not a wildlife photographer any more than I am a landscape photographer or photojournalist, so I was going into this with trepidation. I was also going into it with the knowledge that my own journey of discovery would be watched and accompanied by the other participants. This monograph, the second in *The Print & The Process* series, is a collection of images from that safari accompanied by thoughts and lessons learned during the struggle to find and express my vision of a land I'm deeply touched by. No matter how long we've been at this, we wrestle, we learn, we re-learn. And no matter how specialized we think we are in one area of photography, shooting something else can teach us something new or remind us of lessons forgotten.

The Print & The Process Series was created as a means to show my work and the work of others, accompanied by a discussion of why and how the images were created. I trust you'll find inspiration in both the images and the words.

David duChemin
Vancouver, 2010

THE PRINT


LINDA DAY CARE
(Age 3 months to 3 years)
Welcome. ALL
LINDA CHILDREN & EDUCATIONAL CENTER
(0723 435 276


ARSENAL
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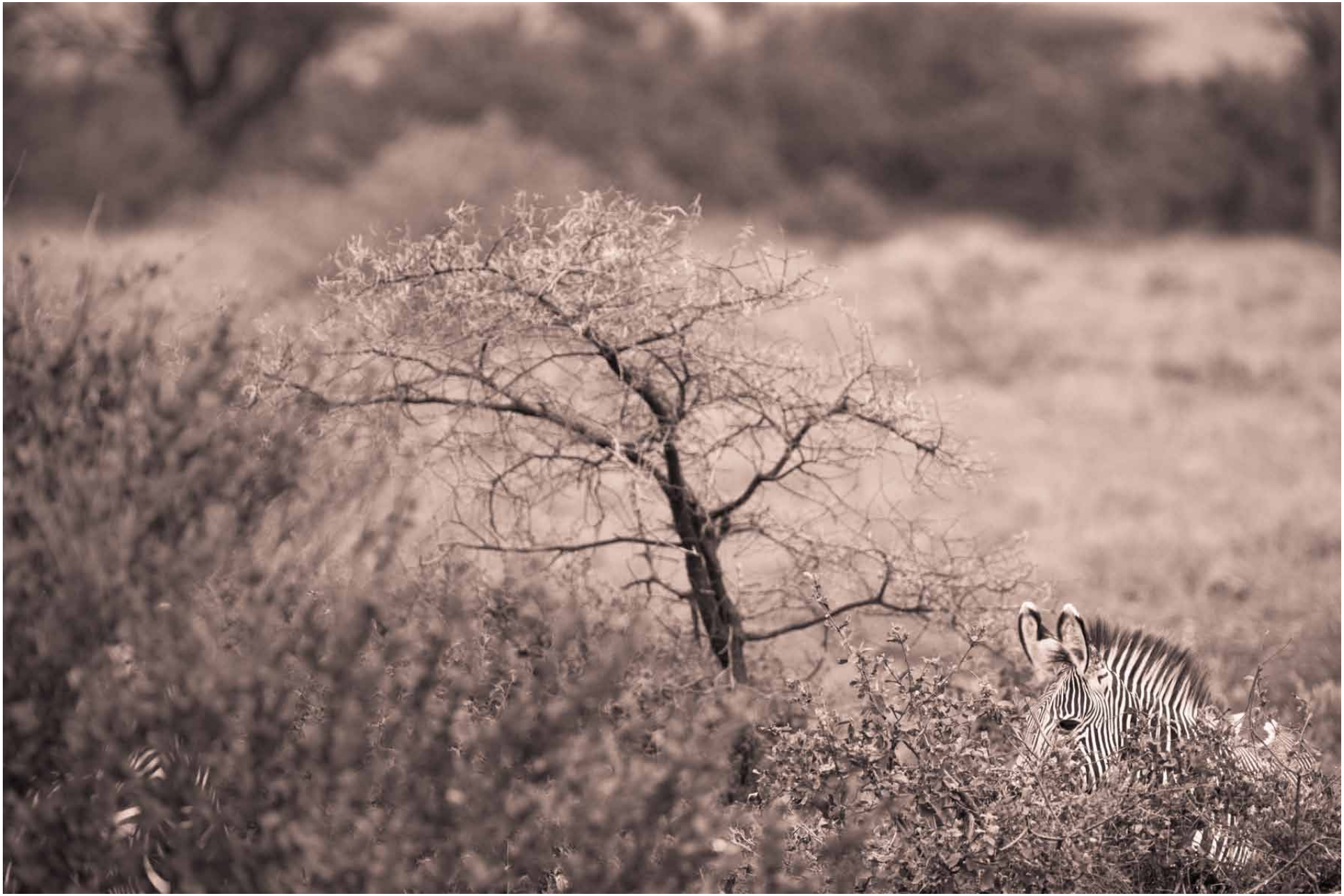
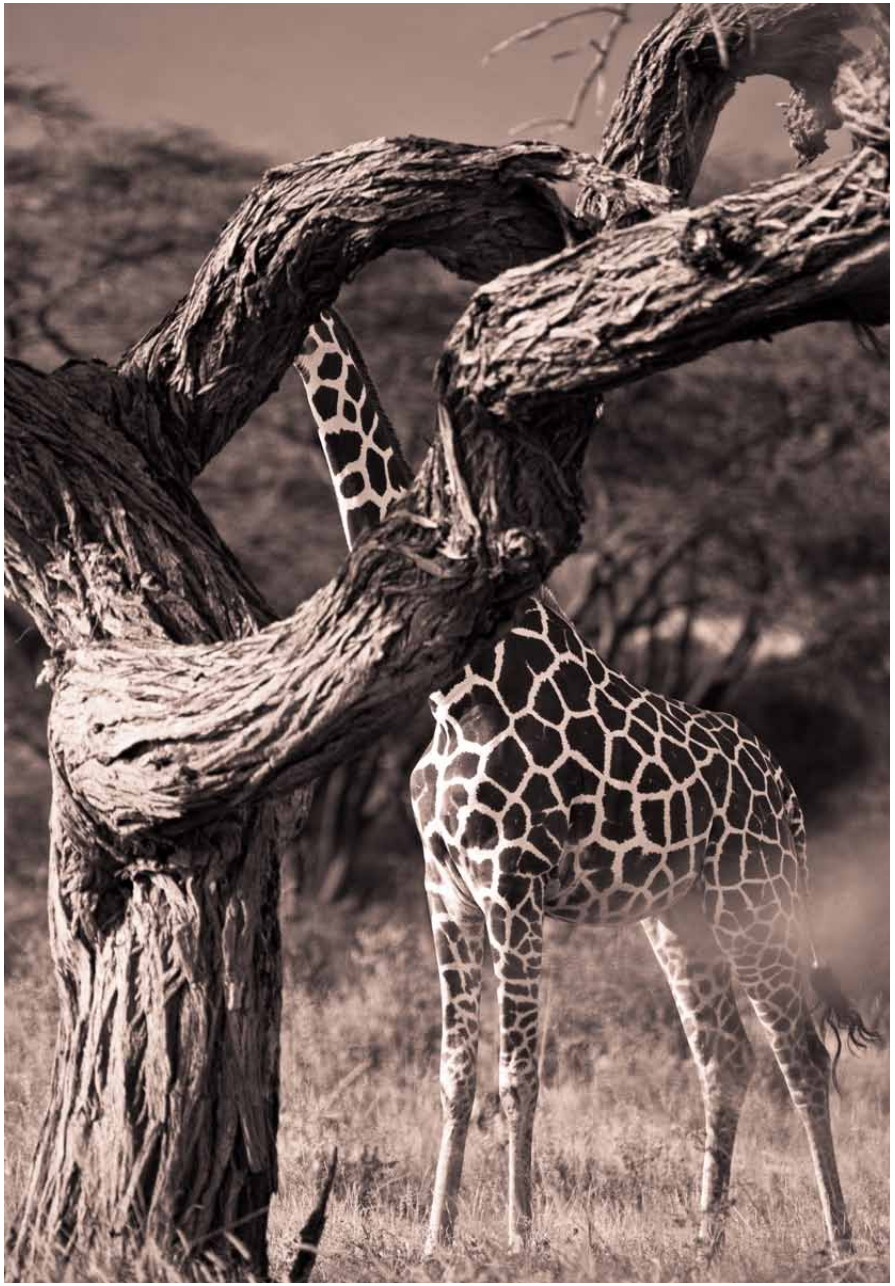
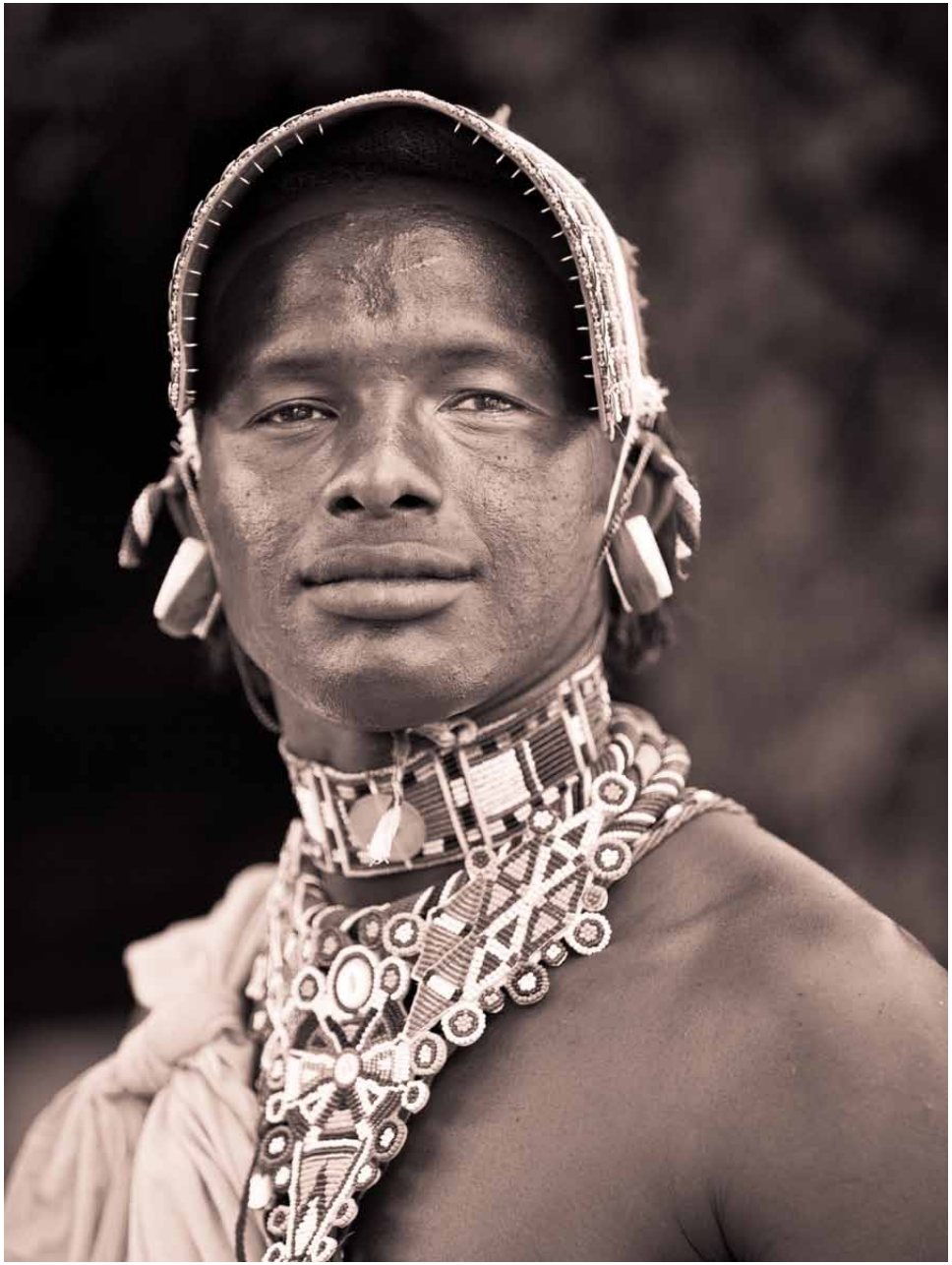
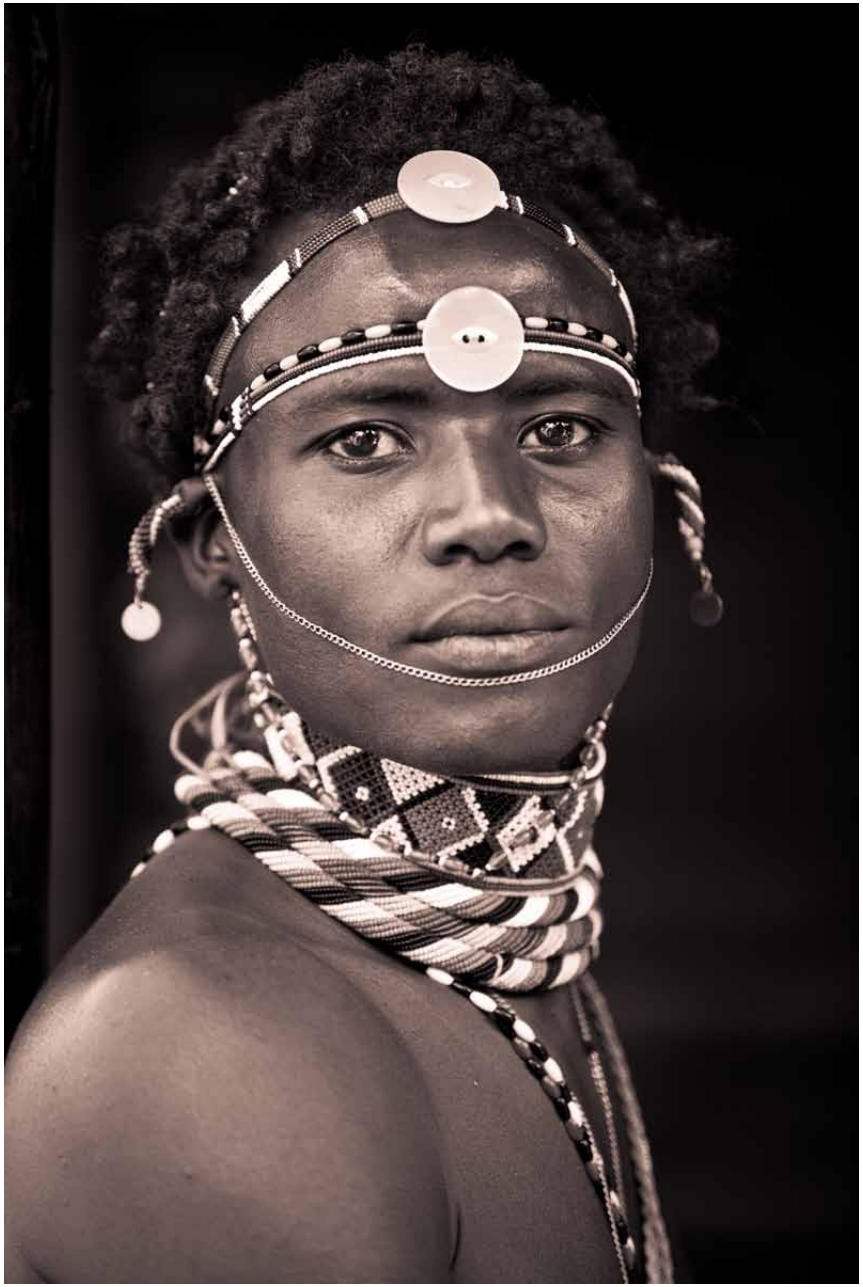
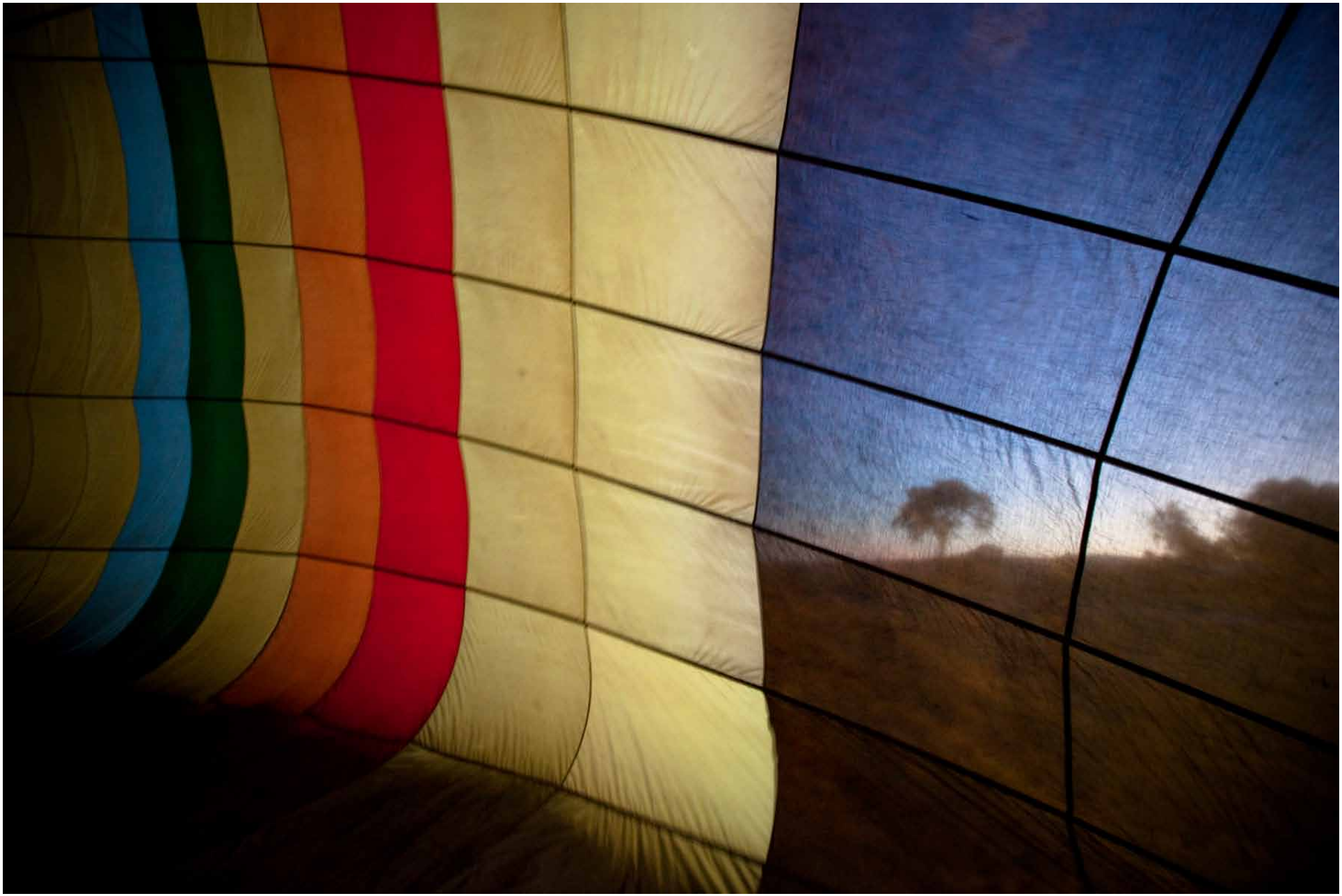










THE PROCESS

Photographing wildlife is not easy. I think that needs to be said right away. But while wildlife presents its own challenges, the elements that make a great image are the same from one photographic discipline to another. That was my first hurdle—the mental block that told me I was here to photograph both landscapes and wildlife, and that I had no idea what I was doing. On the one hand, I think that kind of humility helps us create better work. On the other hand, I think it can block us with negativity instead of opening us to experimentation, play, and discovery. Sure, the gear was different, as was the way of working and the kinds of constraints I was faced with, but in the end, as it is with every assignment, it's a question of experiencing a place with an open heart and mind, and finding a way to express your vision in your images. What I'd learned in other, more familiar disciplines still worked in this one. A good photograph is still a good photograph and you don't need to reinvent the wheel each time you photograph something new.

I think it's probably going to be helpful for you not to look at this as a "how to shoot your first safari" guide. It isn't meant to be that. It's meant to be an opportunity to share the work I created and the lessons I learned that resulted in the final collection of images presented here. Instead, you might look at this as a "what safari taught me about photography" book, as the lessons learned on that short two-week trip are ones that have come back to me time and again in my other work, or were, at the very least, reminders of things I thought I already knew.

You Can't Photograph What You Haven't Seen.

We all arrive at our destinations with expectations—hopes and assumptions about what the place will look like, what we will see through our lens, and what the images with which we return will look like. These expectations can give us ideas, fuel us with excitement, and push us through the jetlag to get out into the morning light. They can also blind us. When the light of what we hope for and what we expect is shining directly in our eyes, it's nearly impossible to see what actually is. My first struggle on every single trip, even now that I should know better, is to punch through my expectations. In Kenya, it took me a couple of days to catch my breath again, to slow down

to the rhythms of African life and ways of relating. Don't rush this. The sooner you can let go, the better, but getting frantic about letting go often just makes it harder. I've wrestled this by taking time to do something other than see the things I most want to shoot. Spend a day or two doing something else.

We spent a day in Kibera, one of the largest slums in Africa. We walked with local guides, met local families, and discussed not only the issues facing the people in this community, but the paradigm shift we were experiencing. What people fail to realize in a place like Kibera is that it has become normal life, and home, to the people living there. The issues are complicated and often far from the issues of our own lives, but these are real people living real lives and not all of them want to be rescued, or whatever our first inclination to intervene is. They also do not want to be a tourist attraction. It would be easy to spend a day in Kibera and emerge with stereotypical images of poor Africans living in squalor. But to what end? To make us feel like the hard-core photojournalist we never became? To tell incomplete stories we ourselves refuse to be part of? The challenge in a place like Kibera is to learn to see past the thing that makes this context so different from our own to the more universal issues. The challenge is to stop—not photograph—and talk. Listen to stories. Ask about their lives and hopes and dreams instead of making assumptions. Kibera, like any place in the world, is full of stories of triumph and hope, as well as the more expected stories of defeat and hardship.

I'm stalling on that sermon for several reasons. The first reason is I think it's important to slow down and a place like Kibera can help you do that. It can also provide you with needed perspective. I'm not suggesting you go to Kibera for this reason; I happened to be there to look at some projects going on there and to accompany a team of photographers who had never experienced this kind of setting or heard these kinds of stories. I'm also stalling on it because I think the key word here is experience: you can't photograph what you don't experience. This applies in every context around the world. You can't re-tell a story you've not first heard and responded to. You can't venture an opinion on something you've not had more than an outside look at. The same is as true on the Serengeti as it is in Kibera.

I arrived on the Serengeti with the experiences of others in my head. I arrived with mental images of *Out of Africa* and Hemingway's *The Green Hills of Africa* and *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* rattling around in my brain. The problem with these images is that the moment you hit the ground you begin comparing what actually is to what you imagined it would be. I've experienced this around the world in places like Red Square, the Taj Mahal, or St. George's Church in Lalibela, Ethiopia. It never fails, and pretending you have no expectations doesn't work. Or it doesn't for me. What works best is facing the expectations head on, acknowledging the difference, taking a breath, and spending some time just experiencing things. Often this means putting the camera in the bag; other times it means creating hundreds of sketch images—intentionally lousy first drafts of the images I will take later in the week. I knew I would not return home with images that resonated with me and expressed my own view and experience of safari unless I first experienced it.

Experience is a multi-sensory thing. Close your eyes once in a while. How does the African sun feel on your face? What smells are present? Listen intentionally to what a moment ago you thought was silence; how many birds do you hear? All of these things, and so many more, begin to form a sensual foundation for your experience, and therefore your perception. Don't be afraid to make notes of those impressions. My little Moleskine notebooks are full of scribbles, made worse by the fact that I write them as I bounce around in a Land Cruiser. Golden plains. Blue skies. Lone tree on perfect hill. Billowing clouds. Impossibly green. Women walking together, perfectly straight under heavy loads on heads. Endless yellow jerrycans used in endless ways. Bicycles carrying unlikely loads: fish, charcoal, chicken. What you are doing is beginning to create a visual inventory of the ways in which you are experiencing a place. The person next to you might emerge with an entirely different list because, though we travel through a place together, we experience it alone. It is just me and the scene before me. And I will take this list and begin to see patterns emerging, begin to get a sense of the images I will most want to take home with me.

My list came into play the moment we hit the Serengeti and began to photograph the animals. Often at this point it becomes a mental list, but I do this so often the mental lists are as

helpful and as easily recalled as ones I actually write down. So I take note of my reactions to every experience. My first giraffe sighting. My first big cat or elephant. I raise my camera almost every time, in case something amazing happens, but my first job on these early encounters is not to shoot but to perceive, to experience. Notice I did not say it is my first instinct to do so; my first instinct is to fill my memory card with images and go back for more. But I know how I work and my first images rarely become final photographs—they lack insight, they lack depth or texture. I'm usually incapable of seeing things clearly in the frame because all I see is "OH MY GOSH, IT'S A LION!" and clickclickclickclickclick. I have learned to slow down, a lesson I seem to need to re-learn each trip. Sure, make the photograph, but do it mindfully. And when the adrenaline has passed look very, very critically at the image. How's the light? How's the background? How's the gesture and the composition? If you're like me there is a significant difference between a beautiful photograph of the way in which you see and experience elephants, and a reactionary photograph of your first elephant. The same holds true no matter where you travel—when faced with the exotic it's tempting to mistake a mediocre photograph of something exotic for a good photograph. An interesting photograph is not the same thing as a photograph of an interesting thing. Applied to portraiture or wedding photography, for example, it's important to note your first reactions to a subject or a couple. What is it about the face of this man, or the look in his eye, that you first notice? What is it about the interaction between this couple that most piques your curiosity? Now let that inform the photographs you make.

Before I go to bed each night I download my cards and do an initial review. It might only take 30 minutes and I'm usually exhausted, but the time spent looking at the work I have just done usually prepares me for the work I have yet to do. In the morning we'll get back into the vehicles and go see similar things, and if you're honest with yourself you know that the lions aren't going to change overnight. But the setting will, and the way in which you choose to photograph them can too if you know what works and what doesn't. How was the light? Does side light work better to bring out the texture of the elephants? What about backlight? Did you shoot the whole day front lit because you were so

excited to see and photograph an actual leopard that it never once occurred to you to ask the driver to pull around the side to give you a better angle? Look at your backgrounds. Did you shoot all day on f/8.0 when a larger aperture would have given you softer—and less distracting—backgrounds? Are there other safari vehicles in the backgrounds you never noticed because, well, there was an elephant in the room? We can be forgiven for making some of these mistakes once, but when we have a chance to look at our day's work and correct our course in small increments, our photographs will improve.

They say familiarity breeds contempt. It can also breed something closer to objectivity. When we (and by we I mean me) first see an elephant or a Maasai warrior, or our first cowboy in Wyoming, we assume it is the last one we'll ever see and we empty our 16GB CF card in minutes trying to get as many frames as possible in hopes that one might be later rescued in Photoshop and—THANK GOD!—we can go home with something—anything!—to put on the website. And then, because that same God that gave me free will and the choice to create hundreds of lousy photographs also inspired technicians in Japan to create a way to format these cards and erase the evidence of my folly, I'll have a chance to get this out of my system and delete the images before anyone sees them. And tomorrow, when I've calmed down and seen enough elephants that if I never see the colour grey again it'll be too soon, I can slow down and concentrate on making a good image of an elephant. I'll have had time to reflect on the visual inventory I've been keeping. I'll be more conscious of what I'm really seeing and reacting to. It might be the interactions between elephants, it might be the size and scale. It might be the texture, the tusks, or the eyelashes. Whatever it is, the chance to create hundreds and hundreds of lousy sketch images now will free me later to slow down. Of course you could do this by simply keeping the camera down and observing, but different people learn to see differently and I find the act of looking through the lens and framing the subject helps me see better.

It's Not About The Gear, But...

I'm fond of saying that gear is good, but vision is better. It's no less true out on safari, but the gear really matters out here on the Serengeti. For most of my work,

I can make do with a couple of short lenses, making compromises when I've only got a 24mm and not a 16mm. But out here there are several challenges. The first is the constraints involved in photographing large game. The second is the environment itself. The third is the transportation—you'll be in planes and trucks, and both have their challenges.

Working with large game, like working with any wild animals, means using long lenses. Elephants don't just do what they are asked, and when working within the boundaries of established parks you'll be restricted to remaining inside the vehicle and the vehicle will generally be restricted to remaining on established roads and paths. So if the animals won't come to you and you can't get closer to the animals, your only option is to use longer focal lengths.

My primary lens on safari, while photographing the animals, was a 300/2.8 lens with image stabilization. It was often paired with either a 2x or 1.4x teleconverter. Animals are unpredictable and there are times they'll get closer than you imagined, so my second body was usually paired with a 70–200/2.8 lens. I am not a dedicated wildlife photographer and while I use the 300mm for other work, I don't imagine I would ever use anything longer, so that informed my choice of the 300 with extenders, instead of something larger. Cost is also a limiting factor and even the 300/2.8 is an expensive piece of glass. A 100-400 zoom lens is also a popular choice. Every lens choice presents you with a challenge and you'll have to choose between size, cost, reach, and speed. A larger aperture allows shallower depth of field and a greater isolating effect. Image stabilization is a big help with longer lenses. And the moment you begin flying from one camp to another you'll be faced with the most insane weight limits you've ever heard of. All of these things come into play and there's no right answer, but you'll want the largest lens you can reasonably afford while not being so weighed down you can't get anything else on the plane. Here's what I brought with me:

- Canon 5D Mk2 and 1Ds MkIII bodies
- 300/2.8L IS
- 70–200/2.8L IS
- 24–70/2.8L
- 17–40/4.0L
- EF 2x and 1.4x extenders

- 1 Kinesis Safari Sack
- 1 Gitzo carbon fibre monopod
- 1 Gitzo Basalt tripod

- Singh-Ray filters – polarizers and graduated ND filters
- Chargers and extra batteries
- 13" MacBook Pro, chargers, external hard drive.
- 100 GB of CF cards, CF card readers

- Photoflex 5-in-1 light disc for portraits
- 2 Gura Gear Kiboko bags

With all this gear, I think I'd make only a few changes. I'd leave the monopod at home, for sure. It only got in the way and after the first day's game drives, I never brought it out again. I'd leave the 24–70/2.8L at home if weight were an issue. By far the best investments were the 300/2.8, the Kinesis SafariSack, and the Kiboko bags. (I brought two, but carried other stuff in them. One Kiboko bag can carry an incredible load of gear.) When I repeat this trip I will bring two Kinesis beanbags and stuff them with lentils or rice when I arrive. I will also bring a Manfrotto superclamp. There are a variety of safari vehicles, but many of them have a metal lip around the passenger area. The Kinesis bag sits brilliantly here and softens vibrations for long-lens shooting, but the second camera often got in my way or was inaccessible when I most needed it, so I plan to mount a superclamp and tripod head to the vehicle so I can mount my second body securely and get to it when I need it.

Safari for me was about more than just the animals, so I brought a decent tripod and enough filters to photograph the landscapes and camps at dusk. I had two polarizers: a Singh-Ray warming polarizer and a Singh-Ray Gold-N-Blue polarizer. I had four graduated ND filters (all of them Singh-Ray), 3-stop and 2-stop soft transition grads, and 3-stop and 2-stop hard transition grads. I also brought a large 42" Photoflex 5-in-1 disc for portrait work as I rarely travel without it.

The second challenge was the environment itself. It's dusty out there and driving around only kicks that dust into the air. My primary body was my 1Ds MkIII, a really well-sealed body. I used two bodies to keep lens changes to a minimum but even that helped only a little. Changing teleconverters can be a messy job and eventually your lenses and sensors will need cleaning. I wiped down and cleaned my gear nightly before I charged things up and put in new CF cards, and blew out the chamber regularly with a blower. Thanks to Andy Biggs' suggestion, I used a nylon backpack rain cover to slide over my camera when the

dust really kicked up while driving from one point to another. You can buy these cheaply at MEC in Canada, REI in the US, and backpacking stores internationally. For cleaning I brought the following:

- 5 large microfiber cloths for wiping down lenses and bodies
- 1 large Rocket blower bulb
- 1 Visible Dust Arctic Butterfly sensor brush

I generally clean my sensor with a brush as a last resort and have never used swabs, but on my next trip I will look into bringing swabs as well. It's a long way to travel only to have an impossibly grimy sensor and no way to clean it.

Finally, the challenges of transportation itself. Working from moving trucks means you want minimal gear, you want to access it quickly and, when you are working with other photographers, you want your gear marked. I carry a small roll of yellow gaffer tape and a Sharpie to identify everything from lens caps to tripods and beanbags. If it can be mistaken for someone else's, I mark it. I shot out of my Gura Gear Kiboko bag every day and can't imagine shooting out of anything else. It opens in a unique way that allows you to access your gear in limited spaces and it was designed by Andy Biggs, a seasoned and accomplished safari guide and photographer. My Kinesis SafariSack was the one piece of gear for which I was thankful over and over, and I'd never do a safari without it.

Layers of Impact

It was in Kenya that I began working on an idea I've called "Layers of Awesome" in my head; on paper it sounds better as Layers of Impact. It goes like this: a photograph goes from mediocre to good to great depending on the strength of the layers of impact. You can do this two ways. The first is to multiply the layers of impact, as in a well-composed (layer one) photograph that has a beautiful moment (layer two) captured in beautiful light (layer three). The second is to have one layer so strong that you really need nothing else, as in a grab shot of a moment of such intensity, that nothing—not even focus nor so-called perfect exposure—would increase the impact.

The reason I play with this idea is because so many photographers seem so enthusiastic about calling this or that image "awesome" or "great" or "amazing" but are quite unable to say what makes it so. The ability to identify and talk about

the elements within the frame of the photograph is an important one. Being able to say what makes an image work is a good first step in being able to incorporate these elements—the layers of impact—into our own photographs, intentionally. Asking yourself "what are my layers of impact?" is another way of asking "what makes this image work?"

Among these layers might be the quality of light in a photograph, a perfect moment, incredible color or tonal contrasts, or the simplicity (or complexity) of your composition. I'm not looking to catalogue these layers, just to be increasingly aware of them, and in Kenya I became more aware of them because photographs of beautiful animals are not necessarily beautiful photographs. It's no different from any other photographic subject. An interesting man in a turban doesn't make an interesting photograph; you still need light. Gesture. A moment. You need something more than just a really close photograph of a lion, and that's what separates the great wildlife photographers from the rest of us—they spend enough time waiting for the great moments, the great light, the great foreground in front of a great background. And the more layers present, the more textured our images, the more they engage us. Want better images? Look at the layers; put as many as you can within your frame, and where you can, make them great. Don't settle for light when you can get, or wait for, great light and add it to a great moment with great framing.

Asking myself "what are the layers of impact?" has forced me to be more aware of my frame. After all, there must be something you're asking people to look at. What is it? Now maximize that something. If it's light, make sure you've done the best job of capturing that light. If it's a set of lines, find the best possible angle so those lines can speak as powerfully as possible. Whatever it is, consciously make decisions to maximize the impact, especially if it's carrying the image and giving the photograph its power and draw.

It's Always More Than Just Elephants

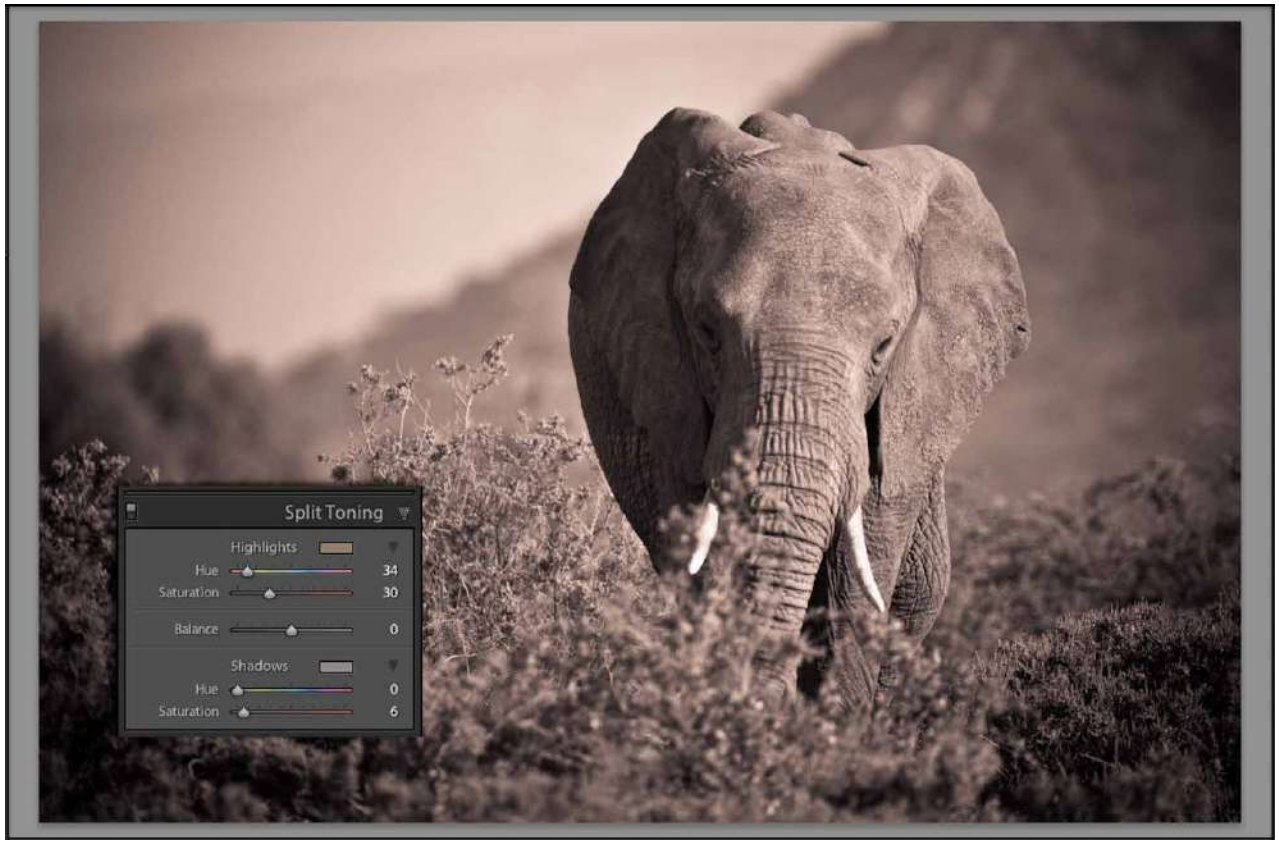
Safari is more than a chance to photograph the Big Five. My experience in Kenya gave me multiple times each day to photograph landscapes and portraits, as well as images that would be considered travel, lifestyle, or editorial.

One of my favourite mornings was a hot air balloon ride over the Serengeti. The light was beautiful and the whole thing was an unending opportunity for beautiful images. But it might have slipped me by. We didn't see a single elephant or giraffe, and my expectations—I imagined images of animals creating long shadows in the low morning light—might have blinded me to photographing it as an adventure of its own. I might have kept my cameras in the bag until we were in the air, thinking "I came here to shoot animals from the air," and in doing so I would have missed the inflation of the balloon. It's a refrain I keep repeating only because I keep re-learning it myself and I can't be the only one dense enough to need a reminder. Expectations can blind us. On a few days I challenged myself to try shooting at twilight, and as I had to be back at camp to do so, that meant finding something other than animals to photograph. It meant I had my camera with me when opportunities like the setting of the dinner tables by lantern light occurred.

In Kenya, the presence of the incredible animals of the Serengeti occurs among both the Kenyan tribal culture and the tourist safari culture. It also occurs within breathtaking landscapes, and to miss them because I was so engrossed in the need to photograph the animals would have been a great shame. The lesson applies in every context you might shoot. We are surrounded by stories and every story has a context that links to other stories. It's not unlike shooting a sunrise: sure, you can shoot the sunrise itself, but unless you turn around you'll miss that beautiful alpenglow hitting the mountains behind you. No matter what you came to photograph—the Eiffel Tower or the elephants on the Serengeti—look behind you. Look all around you. Because it's always more than just elephants. In my Safari monograph I chose to represent this, as I often do, with two series. The first is a duo-tone series representing the classic safari images I'd always imagined, the ones I thought I went to shoot. The second is a colour series more or less representing the 360-degree view, the context.

Serengeti Choclolate Duo-Tone

I discuss this in *Vision & Voice, Refining Your Vision in Adobe Photoshop Lightroom* (Peachpit/New Riders, July 2010) but this is the way I developed the duo-tones, using a preset I called Serengeti Chocolate.



If you're using the downloaded preset, do a great Black and White conversion, then apply the preset, which is set to alter only the split-tone values, or use the values in the screenshot above.

My Serengeti Chocolate preset is available for free download here:
http://www.craftandvision.com/downloads/Serengeti-Chocolate.lrtemplate.zip

To install the preset in Lightroom go to the Develop module, and into the Presets panel. Right-click the words User Presets and then click Import on the resulting flyout menu. Now navigate to the unzipped .lrtemplate file, select it and hit Import.

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 1/160 @f/22, ISO 400

We stopped at the equator to use the washrooms, watch the water go down the drains in different directions, and give everyone a chance to buy kitsch they didn't need. I'm always on the lookout for signs that place the image or series of images firmly in context; even better when those signs are as weathered as this one. The yellow and orange hues on this sign, and the blues in the sky give this image some beautiful colour depth. I had to move around a bit to get a dynamic angle on the sign as well as the lens flare.

Canon 1Ds/III, 30mm, 1/1600 @f/4, ISO 400

I love contrasts, particularly ones that exist less in the image and more in our minds. Culturally I think most westerners have a particular idea of what a daycare is or is not. I think it's fair to say this one doesn't fit our usual ideas. And yet this is so African. In my experience, Africans are incredibly enterprising; these kinds of ventures pop up around every corner. Possibly the most jarring I ever saw was the business whose sign said "Makers of Fine Furniture and Coffins." African reality is different from ours; it would benefit us to be exposed to that reality a little more.

Canon 1Ds/III, 34mm, 1/800 @f/4, ISO 400

Another contrast, this time a boy in Kibera playing with sticks and a tire—crude playthings—in front of a wall proudly bearing logos from the billion-dollar athletic industry. I wasn't trying to say anything with this, just showing what I saw and was amused by. And while I was amused by this contrast it's the apparent juxtaposition of this boy's joy in his playing, regardless of his surroundings, that I was most drawn to. He chased me with the tire and I chased him with my camera.

Canon 1Ds/III, 420mm, 1/640 @f/4, ISO 400

This pair of images is one of the first I made on safari. They were the beginnings of my effort to create photographs with meaningful gesture, and by meaningful I mean gesture that is both characteristic of the animal while also tapping our own emotions. I think the implied intimacy of this frame is stronger when paired with the next image, which is about connection, the two antelope merging as one.

Canon 1Ds/III, 420mm, 1/800 @f/4, ISO 400

The symmetry of this was meant to pair with the previous image, which it does. It was also meant to pair with a third image, one of the same two antelope standing back to back. At least that was my hope. I wanted a triptych. The antelope never got the memo. We work with constraints, whether with animals or children, and the subjects will always be true to their own nature, not to our wishes. It pays to think about possibilities, but to hold your expectations with an open hand to avoid disappointment.

Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/1600 @f/5.6, ISO 400

I don't think I will ever stop holding my breath in wonder when I see elephants, particularly as they interact. I wanted my images to somehow convey my very first impression—so large but so social and even gentle, they have this restrained power that is both lumbering and graceful. It's hard to watch them for long without getting a sense of their intelligence, both mentally and emotionally. The connection between the three images on this page is the companionship I saw over and over. Two by two.

Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/1600 @f/5.6, ISO 400

The strong sidelight on this elephant transmits the texture well. It is the total inability to choreograph the animals, or to make the sun do as you wish, that makes the best wildlife photography so stunning. We are all at the mercy of serendipity in our photography—waiting for the light, the moment, and every other element to coincide. It's the fact that these elements often don't coincide that makes the great images so remarkable.

Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/160 @f/5.6, ISO 400

This image and the next were also part of a planned triptych that became only a pair. I had hoped to get a similar frame of the elephant's trunk under similar light, a part of the elephant that has always fascinated me. I'd been creating my visual inventory when this series suggested itself, not that the concept is original. I just wanted closer frames, not of the whole animal, but the distinctive parts. It's a series of images I will add to when I return and as such these represent sketches of a final series, rather than a complete work. Photography is like that; it is often an art we create over years, not just 1/60 of a second.

Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/160 @f/5.6, ISO 400

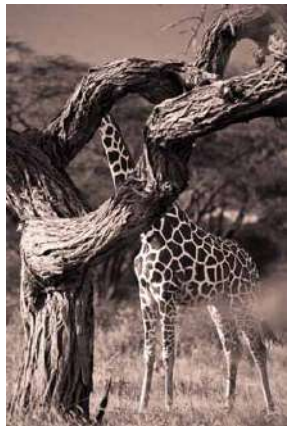
I love the dimension on this, the rough texture meeting the graceful line of the ear and forming a shadow like a great canyon on an aerial photograph. To me it's a little like the elephant itself—it's this amazing combination of power and grace. I found this image by just looking, letting my lens scan the elephant for something I hadn't seen or put on one of my clever little lists. The intentional efforts to find expected images are helpful, but you also have to let the subject speak to you. Photography is about exploration and discovery for me. Sometimes I use it to speak, other times I use it to listen.

Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/400 @f/5.6, ISO 400

The three images on this page are another pairing, this time a planned triptych that actually materialized. I didn't know how these images would come about but I often saw glimpses of animals— just a head, a tail, the line of a back behind a tree. The animals on the Serengeti didn't seem to feel a threat from humans so much as total apathy. I thought of these images as "you can't see me," and the more I looked for them the more playful the theme became in my mind. This is a jackal poking his head above the long grass.

Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/1640 @f/5.6, ISO 400

The second in the "You Can't See Me" series is this zebra. Out on the plains you wonder how the bold black and white stripes can possibly be camouflaging, and then they hide behind bushes and grasses and it's amazing how quickly they blend in. I never thought I'd have to squint to see a zebra.



Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/1640 @f/5.6, ISO 400

This one just makes me laugh. It did at the moment it happened and it does now. At the risk of anthropomorphizing this giraffe, it looks a little like the child who hides his head under the covers on the assumption that "if I can't see you, you can't see me." Of course that's not what's going on, but nothing prevents us as photographers from making implications and even creating images with humour.

Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/500 @f/5.6, ISO 400

My compositions tend to lean towards the clean and the simple. I've been trying to make my images a little less perfect and with this in mind I was drawn to play with the lines in this image. There's still good negative space in this frame but it's not nearly as clearly defined as it usually is in my images. You have to look a little more to get the details in this. As I said, my images tend to have more immediate impact and require less effort from the viewer, and I think they could sometimes benefit from the engagement a little more complexity can bring. This was an attempt at that.

Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/500 @f/5.6, ISO 400

These birds had a special relationship with the giraffes and I'm sure a little research could tell me if it's symbiotic or just a matter of convenience for both. I like this image because I was intent on shooting the giraffe, but when I decided to focus instead on the little birds that kept flying into the frame, the giraffe became not the subject but the context. Intrigued by this and the amazing textures and lines, I decided to abandon the giraffe and see what the birds did. Some of my best images have come as a result of not only being observant, but also abandoning the plan in favour of simply following my curiosity.

Canon 1Ds/III, 600mm, 1/100 @f/5.6, ISO 200

The Cape Buffalo, with apologies to the animals themselves, are not beautiful in my eyes. One of the classic Big Five, I had a terrible time finding one I had any interest in photographing, until I found this one. The buffalo are often up to their necks in mud, covered with flies, and in large groups. This one, balanced in the frame by the lone tree, was the only one I saw that I felt like photographing. Photography is not an art of obligation. If you aren't drawn to photograph something, don't bother until you are. Wait for the shot, or ignore it completely, but don't photograph it unless you care—it'll show.

Canon 5D/2, 120mm 1/400 @f/2.8, ISO 400

To my recollection, this man is Samburu. They are dancers and warriors and no doubt make a better living parading their culture before tourists than herding cattle, but I still feel saddened that their culture is slowly dying; slowly being replaced by the homogeny and influence of the west. Photographing the so-called indigenous is a cliché to some, but I remain captivated by the simplicity of this way of life, the bonds of tribal loyalties, and the attention to detail and beauty in their costumes. I've seen this beadwork among the Maasai as well. I shot this in open shade with a large diffusion panel, further softening the light.

Canon 5D/2, 170mm, 1/100 @f/2.8, ISO 400

Like the previous image, I shot this with a diffuser from the center of a large Photoflex 5-in-1 light disc. One of the challenges of diffusing sunlight on a small subject like a single person is that you can't diffuse the light striking the background. In this case, I photographed the model towards a cabin with a dark, shaded wall. The tight angle of view provided by the telephoto lens, and the difference in exposure values between the model's skin and the background allowed me to expose for him while the background lost its distracting details.

Canon 5D/2, 200mm, 1/80 @f/2.8, ISO 400

As I photographed the previous image, I spun around to see this man, a Turkana dancer, waiting for me to finish so his Samburu colleague could join them for the dance. He was just waiting and after placing my models in the best light I could find it was humbling to see this man just standing there in perfect light. On a darker background the ostrich feathers of his headdress would have been lost. As it is, he couldn't have picked a better spot. No matter how many times I learn the lesson, I seem to forget to turn around, be observant, be less fixated on what's in front of me. This was a good reminder.

Canon 5D/2, 24mm, 1/200 @f/2.8, ISO 800

In terms of Layers of Impact, this one has a few—the frame within a frame composition, the tonal contrast, good light, and a good moment. But without the moment—the unselfconscious joy of the child on the left—this image would lose its impact for me. I've shot thousands of photographs of children looking at the camera, and they often have the power of emotional connection, but there is an authenticity about this moment that posed ones rarely have and I think the difference between the two kids in this frame shows that well. I was drawn to the kids but it didn't do much for me until the one child let her guard down and stopped paying attention to me.

Canon 5D/2, 130mm, 1/800 @f/2.8, ISO 200

I've never shot so many lone trees on lonely savannah before. But there is something about the thorn tree and its iconic shape that I adore. The symmetry of these three receding trees under clouds that mirror the canopies of the trees struck me at once. In fact, my friend Dave Taggart and I both yelled at our driver to stop at the same moment. This single landscape makes me hum Toto's song" Africa" every time. I brought out the clouds a little more powerfully with some dodge and burn in Lightroom, and some added clarity, which increases the contrast in the mid-tones and adds texture.

Canon 1Ds/III, 180mm, 1/1000 @f/5.6, ISO 400

Approaching Crescent Island by boat on Lake Naivasha, a hole opened in the floor of heaven. I'm not even sure why I like this as much as I do, except perhaps that the metaphor works for me, and where there is metaphor there is usually story and meaning, even if no one else sees the same thing. I post-processed this image and the following three images in a similar way with a split tone created in Adobe Lightroom. I gave the highlights—mostly sky—a blue tone and the shadows—mostly the vegetation—a green tone, for no other reason than it seemed right; it felt right.

Canon 1Ds/III, 200mm, 1/1000 @f/8, ISO 400

Wildebeests. On a hill. Odd animals, these are not the most attractive but they create a striking and unmistakable silhouette. If I could change anything I'd have them on the hill without the tree in the background, but while that would make a simpler composition, it would also be too perfect. I'm in favour of great, even perfect, compositions, but they've become something of a rut for me and I'm trying to jump out of those ruts by embracing the imperfections. Still, next time I'm going to be tempted to cut the trees down and do it right.

Canon 1Ds/III, 400mm, 1/1250 @f/5.6, ISO 400

Though I think this image works on its own, it works best paired with the next one, Burning Bush. If the next image echoes the biblical story of Moses, this one is more about me—more often recording these events than feeling like I'm a part of them, more often the storyteller than the character in the story. Or it's just a photograph of a tourist taking a picture of a tree. Still, I liked the simplicity and the two solitary figures on the hill and the interaction, of sorts, between them.

Canon 1Ds/III, 350mm, 1/160 @f/8, ISO 100

This is my burning bush image. After five years in theology school, I see metaphor and symbol in the narratives most familiar to me, in this case the story of God's revelation to Moses in the burning bush. I loved this column of cloud and the way it rose perfectly, though so quickly and fleetingly, behind this shrub.

Canon 5D /2, 24mm, 1s @f/9, ISO 800

We stopped for a Sundowner and I'd been lugging my tripod around for days in anticipation of a great Thorn Tree Silhouetted at Sunset in Front of Large Red Sun Just Like Everyone Else Has Shot. It never happened. Probably a good thing. I'm still not sure what drives us to recreate the images others have created. I wonder if painters spend time re-creating the works of Degas or Monet or, I don't know, Robert Bateman. Do we undervalue originality? This is the image I created instead, and while it's different than what I first imagined, it's also one I feel more connected to—and that's what matters to me.

Canon 5D/2, 42mm, 1/50 @f/10, ISO 400

In almost every workshop I do the Singh-Ray Gold-N-Blue polarizer eventually gets called the Un-suck Filter—a reference to my always saying there is, in fact, no such thing as an un-suck filter, no way to rescue a poorly conceived image. But this filter is a magical one; it can take mundane light and do amazing things with it. Like anything, there is the danger of over-use. Used well, however, and used to express the mood or emotion of a place in a more impressionistic way, this filter (which is hard to find at times and not inexpensive) is an incredible tool. I also used a graduated ND filter to darken the sky.

More info on filters: **Singh-Ray.com**

Canon 5D/2, 35mm, 1/30 @f/2.8, ISO 6400

I wanted to shoot the inflation of the hot air balloons, but when we got there it was very nearly pitch black. I have never shot at ISO 6400 before, in fact I'm not sure I've ever shot above 1600, but I wanted to play and I am astonished at how little digital noise crept in, even at 6400. The trick is to nail your exposure. I had no expectations of images I would really use on this outing, so I think I had a greater willingness to experiment and play. I wonder if we took ourselves less seriously, would we feel there was less risk in stretching ourselves, shooting at the "wrong" ISO or with the "wrong" lens more often? Would our work not be better for it?

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 1/40 @f/2.8, ISO 800

Outside the balloon.

I sometimes over think my work. This is not one of those times. I just liked the colours and the way they worked with the blues in the sky. Nothing fancy, just a clean image about colour.

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 1/4 @f/2.8, ISO 1600

Inside the balloon.

Once I ventured inside the balloon, I saw the distant thorn tree silhouetted against the dawn. I got a couple of frames, then got kicked back out of the balloon. This was shot at 1/4 of a second, handheld and fired in a burst with the hopes that the middle frame would be sharp, which it was. There are soft bits in this image, but as best I can tell that's the motion of the balloon. I could have looked at the exposure and not bothered, but I'm glad I took the risk. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 1/100 @f/2.8, ISO 800

I love the silhouette of this man, and the burst of flame. Next time I will drop to my knees and shoot upwards so that the man is silhouetted against the sky. This makes for a cleaner composition. I like this image but I suspect it's just a sketch, a concept I'll use next time with a more intentionally chosen POV (point of view).

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 1/320 @f/2.8, ISO 800

Great lines in this one. Except the line created by the rope coming out of his nose. But other than that, and frankly that nose rope makes me smile, it's the light and warmth of this image I like. The choice of the 16mm lens on the full frame of the 5D allows the diagonal lines on the right side of the frame to pull the viewer in and, I think, gives a feeling of being there. The more we feel a part of an image, instead of merely observing it, the more we'll have experienced it, and I think that's one of the goals of most photography —to not only show something but to give the viewer a sense of having experienced it.

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 1/60 @f/22, ISO 400

I love the starburst of an edge-cut sun. Give me starbursts and lens flare and I'm happy as can be, in part because I think it draws us in, makes us aware of the medium, and gives us the feeling of being there, behind the camera. Or maybe it's just me. The trick to a great edge-cut is a tight aperture, and I usually shoot on burst or continuous mode, beginning with the sun just hidden, then slowly panning the camera and shooting as the sun peaks out. A good edge-cut sun can't have too little or too much sun showing—that's a big ball of light—so the trick is getting it just right. Shooting several frames usually gives me one that works perfectly.

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 1/200 @f/22, ISO 400

Another edge-cut sun, but this time accidental. I was about to put away my camera when I saw these guys pulling the deflating balloon down, and I loved the dynamic tension created between their straining bodies, the line of the rope, and the balloon. Putting just the smallest piece of the balloon into the image, instead of more of it, gives the image its tension and makes this more about the effort of the men than about the balloon. I think it also gives the image some scale and enforces how large the balloon is and, by implication, how hard they must be pulling.

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 0.3s @f/6.3, ISO 1600

Like so much of my work, this was accidental. I'm still happy to take the credit but I had no idea this would happen. When I finally saw the scene, the waiter was on his last table. I had just the time to drop my shutter a little to get some blur and fire a series of maybe five images. I think in terms of Layers of Impact, this has several things going for it, but also illustrates that when one layer—like the emotional impression or mood of an image—is strong enough, other layers—like our usual need for perfect sharpness—become unimportant.

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 20s @f/8, ISO 800

On this trip I learned to shoot at twilight. My friend Dave Delnea had written an eBook that I published under the title *Below The Horizon, Understanding Light at the Edges of Day.* That book gave me the kick I needed to go play with the quality of light and long exposures not possible at other times of day. The blues become bluer, the colour depth becomes stronger, and the clouds begin to soften as they drag across the sky. It takes time to learn to anticipate what a longer exposure will look like; the camera sees it differently than we do, and what is otherwise a mundane scene can become magical when exposed for 20 or 30 seconds.

Canon 5D/2, 16mm, 30s @f/5, ISO 800

This is a self-portrait, tripped by my friend Sabrina Henry, one night at Karen Blixen Camp just outside the Maasai Mara. I'd been shooting the previous image, sat down for a glass of scotch and began looking at the light flickering on the umbrella and wondering what it would look like on a long exposure. I used to shoot that way, driven to create a shot by nothing more than "I wonder what that would look like..." I think that's why I got into this in the first place. Wonder. Curiosity. I still prize these, along with patience, as key photographic skills and wonder why they aren't more valued than they are.

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Craft&Vision
Pixelated Image Communications Inc
29115 RPO South Granville Post
Vancouver, BC V6J 0A6
Canada

info@craftandvision.com
CraftAndVision.com

Editor & Publisher, David duChemin
Production Editor & Manager, Corwin Hiebert
Copy Editor, Susannah Rohloff
Design & Layout, Justin Keitch