

Abstract Photography Roundtable  
Brentwood Photography Group  
July 3, 2018

## What is abstract art/photography?

The term “abstract” in the art world usually means not visually representational at least in relation to the world we know concretely. Abstract art is often about feelings. The artist is usually expressing a feeling or set of feelings or perhaps working out what those feelings are through their art. Jack Spencer, a well-known artist here in the Nashville area, said, “I’m not telling the truth; I’m expressing a feeling.” Abstract photography uses lines, shapes, colors, textures, composition and so on to express the feeling.

## Types of Abstract Photography

1. Realistic—Found, macro or created
2. Intentional Camera Movement

### Ways to keep the shutter open longer

- A. Adjust the ISO to 100 or lowest possible
- B. Adjust the shutter priority
- C. Adjust the aperture priority
- D. Add a neutral density filter [polarizing filters can help in a pinch too]

### Ways to move the camera

- a. Swipes—Left to right, up to down, diagonally
- b. Shapes—circles, boxes, hearts, etc.
- c. Zooms
- d. Free motion

### General steps for camera motion shots

- A. Focus on the general subject. Turn off auto focus.
- B. If you have Image Stabilization (IS), also turn it off too.
- C. Set shutter priority time somewhere between 1/8 to 1 second.
- D. Practice the movement you are going to make a couple of times without pressing the shutter button.
- E. Take the shot.
- F. See how it came out, how you like it, and what you may want to do differently in your next swipe shot.

### Tips for Camera Movement Shots

- A. Avoid large dark areas or large very light areas.
- B. Check any images that are totally dark using “auto” before deleting.
- C. The rate of movement in all types of camera movement determines how opaque the image. The faster the movement, the more transparent. The slower the movement, the more opaque.
- D. It will often take making several images to get one(s) you like. Experiment!
- E. Results are better if you use your arms to move the camera.

### Camera Movement for Impressionist Images

This camera movement is very similar to the swipe, only much smaller. This movement is more like an exaggerated horizontal shake or exaggerated vertical shake and is very rapid. This uses a much shorter exposure than many of the other camera movements—1/8 to 1/2 second.

### 3. Computer/Camera generated

Camera—Blur, in camera multiple exposures, etc.

Computer—Filters, layers, etc.

### Techniques and Tools I Use a Lot

1. Mining
2. Dehazeing (slider in ACR)
3. On1 Resize or Photoshop to enlarge

### iPhone Apps for Abstract

Slow Shutter Cam \$1.99

Artista Impresso \$2.99

Average Cam Pro \$0.99

Tiny Planets \$0.99

Glaze Free with an option to upgrade

### Resources

#### Websites of Photographers Who Do a Lot of Abstract Work

Nat Coalson at <http://subjectivearts.com/image-catalog/abstract-photography/>

Frances Seward at <http://francesseward.com/>

Freeman Patterson at <http://www.freemanpatterson.com/>

Eva Polak at <http://www.evapolak.com/galleries.html> Her page “Tips and Techniques” has lots of free information on it.

John Paul Caponigro at <http://johnpaulcaponigro.com/gallery/prints-2/>

#### Books

1. Charles Needle has an excellent book out macro photography. *Tiny Worlds: Creative Macro Photography Skills*. A lot of his images in this book and also on his Facebook page are realistic abstracts.
2. Freeman Patterson, a well-known Canadian photographer, has written *Photography and the Art of Seeing: A Visual Perception Workshop for Film and Digital Photography*. About half or so of the images in it are realistic abstracts. It also has excellent content about visual design and composition.
3. *Impressionist Photography Techniques* by Eva Polak has examples and “how-to” steps. It is available on Amazon and from her website. From time to time she offers a free ebook of tips and techniques called *Impressionist Photography Tips and Techniques* if you sign up for her monthly tips.
4. Charles Needle has written a compendium of techniques called *Impressionistic Photography: A Field Guide to Using Your Camera as a Paintbrush*. He is very thorough with lots of examples and settings.
5. “Abstraction in the Landscape” by Justin Black in OutdoorPhotographer.com, March, 2017.
6. *Contemporary Photo Impressionists* by T K McCoy is a book with images and brief bios from eight contemporary photographers who do photo impressionism. The publisher, Sunbury Press, held a contest in 2010 to collect samples of this kind of photography. These photographers came out on top in the contest.