



MARIA KELSON asks what it is, fundamentally, that intrigues and delights our eyes.



Making a unique photographic image—one that arrests the viewer’s attention, interrupts our ordinary perceptions, and captivates us—depends on inspired accident, preparation, and passionate exchange between the photographer and the subject. For the viewer’s attention to be “captured” and “arrested,” the photographer may first have to be captivated by something she’s come upon by inspired accident.

But what is it, fundamentally, that captivates our eyes? Neurologist Dee Joy Coulter, who examines ways of seeing in her book *Original Mind*, notes that our earliest biological experiences with sight are of the detection of light, waves, motion paths, and color. She points out that, as infants, we “don’t have a visual library, so we don’t have references” for what we see. Instead of “binding” features to cognitive notions of “things,” and thereby “recognizing” our world, we first experience vision as the pure sensation of those detectable elements: waves of light, waves of motion paths, and captivating color. Coulter’s book proposes a number of techniques adults can use to recreate this “pure sensation” that’s accessed “prior to perception,” in order to make our minds more limber and ultimately more brilliant in our creativity and our capacity to connect with others.

accident + openness = inspired perception

Coulter also notes that photographers are able already, by dint of their artistic practice, to access the most primary sensory dimensions of seeing through their own openness to color and motion. Moab photographer Anna Reposá’s closeup views of rippling rock surfaces bring color and wave shapes to the forefront of our sensory experience with breathtaking effect. Her uniquely seen landscape shots have the same effect, arresting all the cognitive data we associate with “landscape” and inserting, in the sensorial breathing space that’s opened up, a fresh experience of color, motion, and light. She accomplishes this through her own openness to inspired accident, taking her camera on hikes around Moab and bringing, instead of a shot list, her keen interest in unusual perspectives, both closeup and wider-view. Reposá describes being drawn to “a combination of symmetry, color, or visual texture.” In a primal way, the experience of encountering these elements in her work recreates those first pure sensations of being alive.

If you’ve ever lost consciousness and then come back to it through a sensory-rich tunnel of pre-cognition—that return to consciousness, via the realm of pure sensation, is another way to express the “threshold moment” a viewer can have when looking at arresting images such as those of Reposá. In recounting how she herself accesses those threshold moments as an image-maker, Reposá remembers a particular day of inspired accident—January 24, 2010. She and her husband were trying to locate a trail in an area of Arches National Park called Herdina Park.

“Then came the bonanza,” she recalls. The way to the trail was blocked by a steeply angled rock lip with a pool of water underneath. “So we just started wandering around.” In the new direction they took, she started noticing “bubbles of something” that had formed on top of pools of clear water in potholes. As she began paying attention to the visual dynamic of what was going on in the potholes, she came upon something that she couldn’t label—“bubbles of something.” So she was already closer to pure sensation than re-cognition, since she had no visual library for what she saw.



JAMES SWENSEN traces a century and a half of photography on the Colorado Plateau.



Through the eyes of a different age, it is understandable that the region that occupies much of Utah, Arizona, western Colorado, and New Mexico was seen as no more than wasteland. For those needing to make a living from the land, it provided few answers. A unique and often forbidding terrain, it resisted most attempts to raise crops or support settlement. Instead of beauty, early settlers, including many hardened Mormon pioneers, found frustration. They were not alone. For centuries Native Americans survived on the land, and through time and patience learned what this hardscrabble world was able to produce. Yet, as the great ruins of Mesa Verde on the plateau's eastern edge evince, everyone had their limits.

FACING: William Bell,
Perched Rock, Rocker Creek,
Arizona, 1872, Albumen silver
print. J. Paul Getty Museum,
Los Angeles.

THIS PAGE, DETAIL:
John Pfahl, *Moonrise over Pie*
Pan, Capitol Reef National
Park, Utah, 1977. Photograph
courtesy of John Pfahl.



KELLI KLYMENKO on iPhoneography.



Text and Photos by Kelli Klymenko

[Petrified Forest, iPhone 6]

We live in an ever-changing technological world, where each day we see a new gadget hypothesized, launched, or 3-D printed. Each of us carries in our pockets more computing power than NASA used to go to the moon in the 1960s.

These amazing computers that we call phones are also some of the most creative tools we have ever had. We are all photographers; we are all artists swimming in a world of exponential growth. As a professional photographer who embraces the newest technology upon conception, I often bridge the gap between newest and less new: iPhoneography and traditional digital photography. We are no longer at the dawn of a new age of wonder; day has broken, and we run to keep up as we are relentlessly provided new tools with which to share our beautiful world. There is no better time to share than in today's socially connected space

I shoot professionally with a Canon Mark II 5D, a myriad of lenses, and an iPhone 6 plus a four-in-one detachable lens kit by olloclip. Everything I carry fits comfortably in a daypack and pockets. On rare occasions when I don't have all my gear available while exploring, I rely on my iPhone 6 to take the place of my full-frame

DSLR (digital single-lens reflex camera). The smartphone has truly changed photography forever. It can capture everything from expansive panoramas to macro photos of petrified wood to insects on flowers in images that can then be edited and shared instantly worldwide.

Recently, my wife Tera and I took our family to explore Petrified Forest National Park. It's not every day you can walk among formations that are 213 million years old. While we were investigating our surroundings, of course we were taking pictures. In fact, everyone we saw was taking pictures with his or her phone. I ran into the occasional photographer with gear slung over the shoulder as well, but there's no doubt at all that the most popular camera is the smartphone camera you carry in your pocket. We witnessed countless photographers capturing and sharing moments in time in digital form. Using everything from camera extension poles (Selfie Sticks) to tripods and outstretched arms, these travelers were adamant about one thing: capture it all.

As we walked up and over a hill, past massive petrified logs from ancient environments, the moon was setting in the distance. This is where I opted for my full-frame camera with a 100-400mm lens. Sure, you can use a zoom lens kit for your camera phone, but there's no comparison when

trying to capture the setting moon during the morning light. You can easily photograph the moon, but the quality of a full-frame DSLR with over 24 megapixels is something you just can't pass up, especially when photographing anything on the horizon.

After the moon set over the multicolored badlands of the Painted Desert, I switched my focus from an object 238,900 miles away to an object much, much closer. Thanks to my olloclip macro lenses, I was able to take a closer look at the crystal formations within the petrified

wood. It's amazing how much detail can be captured in each macro shot! I like to get artistic with the focal point on these shots to create a tilt shift effect. This is achieved by rotating the lens plane relative to the plane of the subject (tilt) plus moving the lens closer or farther from the subject (shift). This gives a photo added depth.

My fascination with the macro world doesn't stop at crystalline structures or fossils embedded in stone. The bright blossoms of tiny flowers about to bloom, an insect preening, and the minuscule colors in petrified wood are just the front gate to a world we typically take for granted. The lenses I use are essential for capturing these fleeting moments without having to carry a large camera with me everywhere I go. It's not just the little unseen worlds that are fascinating, especially when it comes to the deserts of Arizona. Another great use for the macro lens is to capture unique textures in almost anything natural you come across. This served me very well in the Petrified Forest, as there were so many interesting and small objects and textures to focus on. And, remember, you can steady your shot with a mini-tripod.

The vast open landscape of the Painted Desert is also a perfect place to capture expansive panoramas. One of the things I love most about that phone in my pocket is the pano feature in the camera app. In the past, I would have to take several photos with my DSLR and then laboriously stitch them together on my laptop before I had a full panorama that I could share. Now it's as simple as panning to capture a 360-degree view in a single image. I also like to

[MOON. DSLR]



[Petrified Forest, iPhone 6. olloclip]



RAEHEL RUNNING **TIME FROM THE BOTTOM UP** When I look up from the shores of the Colorado River I see time from the bottom up. The grandness and smallness. A few pictographs, sherds, and granaries have led me to Central Mexico and the Peruvian Amazon. The lens of stewardship for place, instilled in me since I was a child, has been one of my life's greatest gifts. I have been drawn to the ancient peoples of the Colorado Plateau ever since I was a kid playing hide in seek in their mysterious dark rooms. Their presence in symbols—spirals, animals, migrations, corn, cycles of rain and prayers for the Nature Spirits—continues to reveal their silent stories and leave us with questions and inspired visions. I look for T-doors, remembering the first one I saw when I was ten, on the San Juan River. **WORDS AND STARS** Advice to a fledgling photographer: Limit the gadgets. Longer trips are better as the world falls away each hour of the day. Read the words and study the pictures of those who love wilderness. Keep some form of journal—stilling the mind with pen and paper is a direct link to finding your unique line. Sleep under the stars while you're young and as often as possible when you're older. Look for metaphor in your composition. Make images with someone in mind, even if you don't know them. Help others see the beauty of the world. **GETTING LOST** Sometimes going the wrong way puts you at the right place at the right time. If you're with a group, it's best to hang back and be the last to leave. Fall back into the shadows and silence. Always carry water. **FALLING IN LOVE** Fall in love through the lens. In the end sometimes all that remains is a photograph and the memories it recalls.



A VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM UP AT DESERT VIEW WATCHTOWER ON GRAND CANYON'S SOUTH RIM

shows the inspired artistic collaboration between Hopi artist Ed Kabotie and architect Mary Colter. Kabotie's mural features the Feathered Serpent and tells the story of the first journey of Tiyo through Grand Canyon, connecting the Colorado Plateau to Mesoamerica.



HOODOOS NEAR CHECKERBOARD MESA, ZION



MICHAEL PLYLER The sun is always moving its position in the sky relative to your subject matter, so it's always about the quality of light, whether on the Colorado Plateau or anywhere else. Wait for the light. Different times of day, different months of the year, all can make the difference. **CURRENT WORK** I'm working on a new portfolio called *Hoodoos and Slickrock*. Some of the images I shot on multiple occasions until I was satisfied with the quality of light and shadow. Shooting in 4x5 with a view camera, I might expose nearly twenty pieces of film to get there. Right now this subject matter is my favorite. If in a couple of years if I start a different portfolio with different subject matter, that will be my favorite then.

GEORGE H. H. HUEY I recently came across a new book about the renowned photographer Paul Strand, *Paul Strand: The Garden at Orgeval*. A well-traveled film and still photographer, Strand spent the last twenty years of his life simply photographing his own backyard garden outside Paris, France. Paging through the book, I vividly recalled these black and white images from the time I was studying photography in college in the 1970s. The work Strand produced speaks for itself—his photographs are luminous, precise, and deeply thoughtful; they look both outward and inward at the same time. **CONCENTRATING ON THE INTIMATELY KNOWN** Seeing Strand's images again reminded me of what a meaningful way that can be to work with a camera: to concentrate on a very limited area one knows intimately and to focus on the smaller subjects and scenes. Yet this can be a hard way to learn to see, especially on the Colorado Plateau, and to do it successfully one needs to resist the temptation to bring home yet another photograph of Delicate Arch, or a similarly awe-inspiring site. Strand's work is clearly from another century, when the pace was slower, the tools less portable, and the techniques very different. But his images transcend such differences, or are perhaps even more powerful because of them.

SUMMER THUNDERSTORM causing flooding below Blue Mesa, Painted Desert, Petrified Forest National Park, AZ.