

Creating Fine Art Magic

Provocative Memories in My Heart	1
Creating Fine Art Magic CFAM - Brief Approach	2
Proving CFAM.....	2
Juror's Testimonials	3
Conclusions	6

Provocative Memories in My Heart

Tangled skeins of my soul straighten, stand tall, when, camera in hand, I trod wild, beautiful places to build indelibly provocative memories in my heart. One day, I saw a knee high Bisti hoodoo, posing like a thrown javelin in flight. Quickly, lying on my side, I was able to set this rock spear as carapace for delightful, distant red dog hills. Another day, sunset's marvelous umber light and incoming storm embraced Ship Rock in evening's mystical majesty. And yet another dark cloud bank enshrouded mythical Gothic towers of rock in Monument Valley, letting light's magical ambience define yet silhouette evocative powers of an iconic landscape.

Man's eye is an incredible chalice which preserves exotic memory! At a glance, man knows when beauty penetrates the heart. If only the most expensive camera were that perceptive; that sensitive. Digital camera technology has come a long way - yet lies seriously behind the eye's inevitable prowess. Nevertheless, adaptive software is bridging that awesome gap these past few years. One can now take several images at different settings then create composite fine art images which contain all the evocative tone and color Nature commanded. This process is called high dynamic range HDR photography...



Bisti Badlands
2006 New Mexico Magazine
January Cover



Ship Rock
2010 New Mexico Magazine
Winner ~ Landscapes



Storm Gods
2011 Arizona Highways Magazine
Honorable Mention

I call the process of vision, capture, and development *Creating Fine Art Magic...*

Creating Fine Art Magic CFAM - Brief Approach

Each piece of fine art photography has its own story composed from different chapters; from innocent photographer to skilled professional, from limited shooter to technical guru, from basic software user to skilled fine art photographer. In my case, a small point-and-shoot camera began this trek. Now I use a semi-professional DSLR. Software too shows a significant progression; from early limited Photoshop Elements to all encompassing Creative Suite 5 - even remarkably skilled HDR software.

One path thru photography's maze of hardware and software consists of pursuing Nature and some of her incredible landscapes when a storm has just passed. Pick your site, get there at the right time, find just the right tripod setting, shoot several different images, bring them back to the studio, and develop them in advanced HDR software. If you dare, print, mat, and frame - then submit for juried competitions such as state fairs and magazine photo contests.

When one tangles technical equipment, creative photography, and the eyes natural ability to capture beauty as dramatic memories, the challenge is to reproduce realistic iconic landscapes in fully natural color. Rather than a single image, today's superb fine art requires shooting several images which cleverly capture the full range of tone and detail. Collectively, the result is realistic, high dynamic range (HDR) photography. Singly, each result may become a vibrant remembrance of nature. Taken together, a series of images become ones destined path - winning national photo contests - creating breathtaking fine art magic...

Proving CFAM

In 2006, I submitted a simple, point-and-shoot image from a 'toy' camera to my first magazine photo contest. I was surprised when that *Bisti Badlands* image netted a Cover for New Mexico Magazine. The editor said, "Of 1000 photos, Joe is our cover photographer..." Being of technical bent, I did not believe that win was more than a fluke.

Yet in 2009, I submitted a provocative HDR image of iconic *Ship Rock*. Just stepping into HDR photography, *Ship Rock's* initial reviews encouraged me to submit in a professional category. For Ship Rock I took *only* three location shots, then worked long and hard to create a fine art image. A jury of five judges awarded high New Mexico State Fair honors - 2nd Place, Landscapes. Three more judges from New Mexico Magazine awarded 1st Place, Landscapes. It became a

prestigious entry in the juried First Annual New Mexico Photographic Art Show. Now I began to feel "I am a better- than-average photographer."

In 2011, a multi-image HDR shot *Storm Gods* got Honorable Mention in the prestigious *Arizona Highways Magazine* photo contest. By then well practiced in HDR and advanced points of fine art creation in Photoshop CS5, these skills provide subtle yet emphatic emphasis with multiple refinement tools to enhance *Storm Gods*. I began to think of creating fine art magic...

Juror's Testimonials



Bisti Badlands, *New Mexico Magazine*, Cover, Jan., 2006.

"From more than 1,000 entries, we selected Albuquerque entrant Joe Bridwell's shot of the Bisti Badlands for this month's Cover."



Ship Rock, New Mexico Magazine, Winner-Landscapes, Jan., 2010, p. 32.

One of the most beautiful pictures of Ship Rock I've ever seen! It's a different view with such strong light and color contrasts. I like the circular arc of the dike framing and leading one's eye to Ship Rock...

Fabian West Art Director New Mexico Magazine Dec 2009

Ship Rock is the best photo I've seen of this locale!

Art Bova, Gold Medalist, 2007 Trierenberg Special Themes Circuit, Linz, Austria



Storm Gods, Arizona Highways Magazine, Honorable Mention, Sep., 2011, p. 43.

"This is a great lesson in landscapes, specifically in shooting during weather conditions, or rather interesting or impending weather conditions," *Kida, AHM Photo Editor*, says. "The effects of light is so magnificent, when you photograph a place that doesn't change, like Monument Valley, it's important to consider what does change - - and what does change, often, *are* weather conditions."

Testimonials from qualified judges add to my awareness that creating fine art magic gains national merit for realistic HDR portrayal of natural landscapes.

A test of good HDR software is continued improvement in dramatic preparation. Both the *Ship Rock* and *Storm Gods* award images were prepared using Photoshop CS5 HDR Pro. These images are redone here using Nik's HDR Efex Pro. You'll note a difference between images prepared by Nik and older images printed in the magazines - texture, clarity, vibrance, contrast, and tone more clearly represent what the eye saw to create these wonderful memories of the heart.

Conclusions

From eye thru advanced HDR capture to digital enhancement, we tread that tangled skein as we create breathtaking fine art images! May we suggest our path, its challenges, and these fine art images vitiate the highly devouring skill of Creating Fine Art Magic...

Clearly the diverse, unbiased body of unknown jurors validly seems to agree!



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