

Alain Briot

Beaux Arts Photography

Artist statement 2011

My goal is to create Fine Art Photographs. A Fine Art Photograph, is an image that is both artistically inspired and technically excellent. Just one or the other is not enough. Technique without art is cold and uninviting, while art without good technique prevents the viewer from truly enjoying the work.

For me a work of art is primarily the product of a person, not of a machine. For this reason, a photograph printed straight from the original capture, either film or digital is unsatisfying. Such an image represents the output of my camera rather than the expression of my emotions.

While, as a photographer, I can to some extent choose the type of light, composition, lens, equipment and other technical aspects of the image, I have very little control over the artistic aspects of my work during image capture.

To satisfy my creativity I need to work on my photographs after I complete the image capture. For me, the creative aspect of photography starts after the image has been recorded by the camera. It is then that I am able to infuse the image with the emotional content that I experienced while being at the location where I took the photograph.

To this end I do to the image everything that I deem necessary. On the level of image adjustments, I first adjust the global color balance and the global contrast of the image to my taste. I then focus on individual colors and work towards making them the exact tonalities that I desire. Similarly, I adjust contrast so that it reflects the feeling of open, glowing light or of deep, mysterious shadows, according to my memories of the original scene.

On the level of image composition, I routinely collage multiple captures into a single image. The goal of these collages is to expand the field of view represented in the image far beyond what a single capture can show, even when the photograph is created with the widest lens available. These collages have the added benefit of representing time as well as space. Because the different images that compose the final work are taken over a span of time, which can vary from a few seconds to 25 minutes or more, the resulting collage shows the variation of light, the movement of clouds, and the changes in other moving elements that took place during the time required to complete the image captures.

I also clone elements that I deem unnecessary or unaesthetic. These elements are rarely "trash" (empty cans and other litter) because I can easily remove these prior to taking the photographs. Rather, these elements are either natural features that I could modify in the original scene, or elements that I did not "see" as troublesome when I took the original captures. These include, for example, branches or twigs intruding into the borders of the image, textures whose patterns are incomplete or visually unsatisfying and any other unwanted element.

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The collage process often results in areas of the image being left blank. This is because as the collage process unfolds, the image is warped, stretched and "kneaded", so to speak, into a specific visual projection. Sometimes the goal is to project the image without any distortion. Sometimes the goal is to induce distortion purposefully to reinforce a specific pattern in the image, such as a sweeping curve, or a specific visual rhythm.

This process results in an image that rarely, if ever, fits into a rectangular format. Rather, the image ends up having rounded corners, and areas are routinely left empty, being simply "blank canvas" space. While I could choose to leave the image as it comes out of the collage process, I currently fill these blank image areas with details and patterns cloned from other areas of the image. This process is very similar to painting, in the sense that I add, ad lib, color and patterns that are the product of me imagining what could have existed in locations where there is currently nothing. In other words, I invent photographic information. I create part of the image from my own inspiration with the goal of expressing the emotions and the vision that I had while I took the original captures.

Because of this cloning and "image painting" process, cropping of the image is frequently necessary in order to eliminate unwanted areas and give straight borders to the image. This cropping, and of course the collage process, mean that the final image format is quite different from the original capture format. This final image format is arrived upon because of the image's needs not because of the desire to use a specific, or a "standard," format.

On occasion, the image format that I arrive at through the process I just described is unsatisfactory. In those situations I stretch the image digitally, either in the width or in the height, to give it proportions that represent my vision rather than the technical output provided by the computer and camera combination. This stretching may be rather moderate or quite extensive, depending on the needs of each individual image. When performing this important step, my concern is to not distort natural element beyond believability.

Here, as well as in the other aspects of my work, my concern is believability rather than reality. In other words my goal is not to create an image that represents something that exists, as is, in reality, in the "real" landscape. Rather, my goal is to create an image that is believable, an image of something that one can consider to be possible, even though one could not quite find this exact same image in nature.

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