Workflow for Making a “Fine Art” Style B&W Print

Taking the Picture

- Camera on tripod
- Aperture priority, aperture at 2 EV smaller than it's widest setting, color set on “vivid” automatic bracketing set for -1 and +2 EV
- Take the picture(s) and confirm their exposure coverage by reviewing their histograms

Composing the Image(s)

Compositing combines the 3 different exposure images into one High Density Range (HDR) 32 bit image to include image structure and definition over a 9-10 EV range.

- Convert each image to TIF for processing with Photomatix
- Open and process the three TIF images in the Photomatix Generate HDR pain
- Proceed in Photomatix to Tonal Mapping of the HDR image
- The default setting in Photomatix for Tonal Mapping produces the normally wanted very wide EV (color) image needed to produce a “normal” fine art style B&W print
- Tone Mapping settings can, however, be manipulated for artistic effect to produce a different (and new to photography) B&W image with wide EV cartoon-like representation of the image with a unique new appeal all of its own.
- Save the Tone Mapping image as a Low Density Range (LDR) (but still 16 bit) image for darkroom-like tonal manipulation in Photoshop or other software

- Convert to grayscale via Nik Color Efex B & W conversion with fine tuning adjustments of brightness, contrast, black and white points, and, if desired, color filtration (e.g., as in using color filter to darken sky)
- “Recovery” sharpening (unsharp mask, set at 113 : 0.5 : 0)

- Alternatively, convert to grayscale and manipulate in Photoshop
  1. Color filtration (if desired) layer; merge
  2. Convert via Mode>LAB color (discard color information)>grayscale
  3. “Recovery” sharpening (unsharp mask 113 : 0.5 : 0)
  4. Curves adjustment layer for section by section adjustment of the curve
  5. Selective non-destructive dodging and burning (if necessary) using Shift + Ctrl + N overlay layer to paint white (for dodging) or black (for burning)

- For a final tone-popping effect do a High Pass procedure
  1. Ctrl + J to make a duplicate layer
  2. Apply to it Filter>Other>High Pass with Radius = 10
  3. Combine it with the background layer in soft light blending mode

- Select printing paper and adjust printer settings using 8 x 10 proofing prints

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by Fred Crowle