

Impressionist

PHOTOGRAPHY TECHNIQUES

For creating **photographic works of art**

by **Eva Polak**

There are so many methods of producing impressionist photography including defocusing, panning, intentional camera movement, selective focus, burst zoom, etc... In fact, one technique even uses Vaseline on the lens (or filter for easier cleaning) to diffuse the light beautifully. Each technique offers a different experience, with its own particular

strengths and challenges. The beauty of these techniques lays in their simplicity and there is no need for expensive cameras or special gear. The only requirement is a camera with manual control settings and a touch of creativity. This month I would like to focus on two of my favourites techniques: Intentional camera movement and selective focus.





Camera Movement

I find great pleasure and satisfaction from working with camera movement, despite its somehow unpredictable nature. Quite often the result is as much influenced by good fortune and happy accidents as it is by skill and experience.

You will need: Your camera with manual exposure control, any lens, and optional ND filter(s) to block excess light if necessary.

Begin by setting your camera to shutter speed priority mode and you are ready to create your first impressionist photograph! Shutter speed of 1/10 of a second is a good starting point.



As the camera movement during exposure is going to strip your subject of details, it is important to choose your subject carefully. Trees are usually very forgiving objects to begin with. They have very strong vertical lines, and you can practice on them as long as you need to. Check often your results on LCD screen and adjust your shutter speed or camera movement accordingly.

Learning how to read and interpret your camera's EXIF data (Exchangeable Image File Format) can be a valuable post-shoot leaning tool. It is permanent record of the exact camera settings used, including aperture, shutter speed, focal length, ISO, metering, flash and white balance modes, plus the data and time. Analyze how light, shutter speed and camera movement affected the way your subject matter was recorded by your camera. Choose your favorite results and try to replicate it. The more you practice the better you will become. Slowly, with experience you can move on to more challenging subjects.



The real charm of these photographs lies in their simplicity. It is important to train yourself to break down the scene in front of you into areas of simple shapes and colour. This will help you to create simple composition with a clear message.

Points to Remember

- Take a LOT of pictures. Experimentation is really the key to success.
- Mind your background. Strive for simplicity.
- Don't be afraid of making mistakes. They are part of learning process. With every mistake, you've just learned something new.



Selective Focus Technique

Part of impressionist photography's charm and freshness relies on allowing the light and lens to do what they do so well, but with a little guidance from us. Because we can see the effect in the viewfinder, our job is to simply find a strong composition and focus the lens in a right place.

You will need: Your camera with manual exposure control and a fast lens (1.8 - 2.8 works best).

This time, set your camera to aperture priority mode and choose your widest f-stop. Manual focusing works better and it is easier to just move the camera slightly back and forth instead of rotating the lens-focusing ring to get the right part of the image in focus. By shooting subjects either slightly or largely out of focus, you capture shapes of light, form, and striking colors.

The main goal is to produce painterly photographs that rely more on soft forms than on sharp details. Use lines, colour and basic shapes

to create dynamic and interesting compositions.

The approach to this technique will vary from subject to subject. Find what works for you. In many ways you just have to trust your instincts and allow the light to guide you.

Points to remember

- Have fun with your camera.
- Every lens will give you different results.
- By looking for interesting light instead of looking for interesting subjects you are on your way to creating better photographs.

Final note

Technique is important to the success of any photograph(s), but it's only one aspect of a photographer's work. Techniques should not replace what you are trying to communicate, rather help make that message clearer. It can become a pointless exercise where there is too much reliance on technique.

