

The Secret of Creativity

Part One



Breaking Down Barriers

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Why are most photographers not happy with their own images?

Landscape photography is a remarkable thing; it can take us out of ourselves and into a world of silence, contemplation and a love of the natural world. It can elevate us into perfect flow states, where experience, action and creativity walk hand in hand. Most people don't though, why is that?

I've been making photographs for over 20 years and if I could have talked to my younger self, I would have saved myself a huge amount of frustration, anxiety and needless worry. I would tell them this:

Creativity is not found in a book, video, or on a workshop. It's not found in the camera store next to the filters. It's only found inside you, in your own head. Here is the key to unlock your own creativity, because the path isn't obvious: In fact it is hidden in plain sight. There are a number of barriers between us and our own unique take on creativity, and each of them lines up around us like the bars of a cage. As we address each one, we can see it for what it is and it will dissolve, freeing us to be happier and more in tune with our own expression.

It is not uncommon when speaking to our students that we share many of the same barriers. Humans are much the same as each other, but we also tend to have many of our own barriers that are more personal.

In this first FREE guide to The Secret of Creativity we'll look at some of the shared barriers and how to deal with the. I'll leave space at the back for you to explore your own barriers and some tips to how to dissolve them.



"Thanks Alister, with this new found education I can now go forth and create photographs with greatly improved knowledge and a discerning view of the visuals around me." - Will Enos

Common barriers to creativity

One of the most common is **EXPECTATION**

Expectations come in all shapes and sizes; do some of these sound familiar?

- I'm going to make amazing photographs today (as we drive out for a sunrise shoot)
- I have this great shot in my mind
- The last time I was there it was amazing, I hope to get the same conditions again.
- I've bought the best gear, I'll make great photographs
- I hope there are some awesome clouds
- The sunrise was rubbish, no colour and/or no clouds
- The colourful clouds were in the wrong place

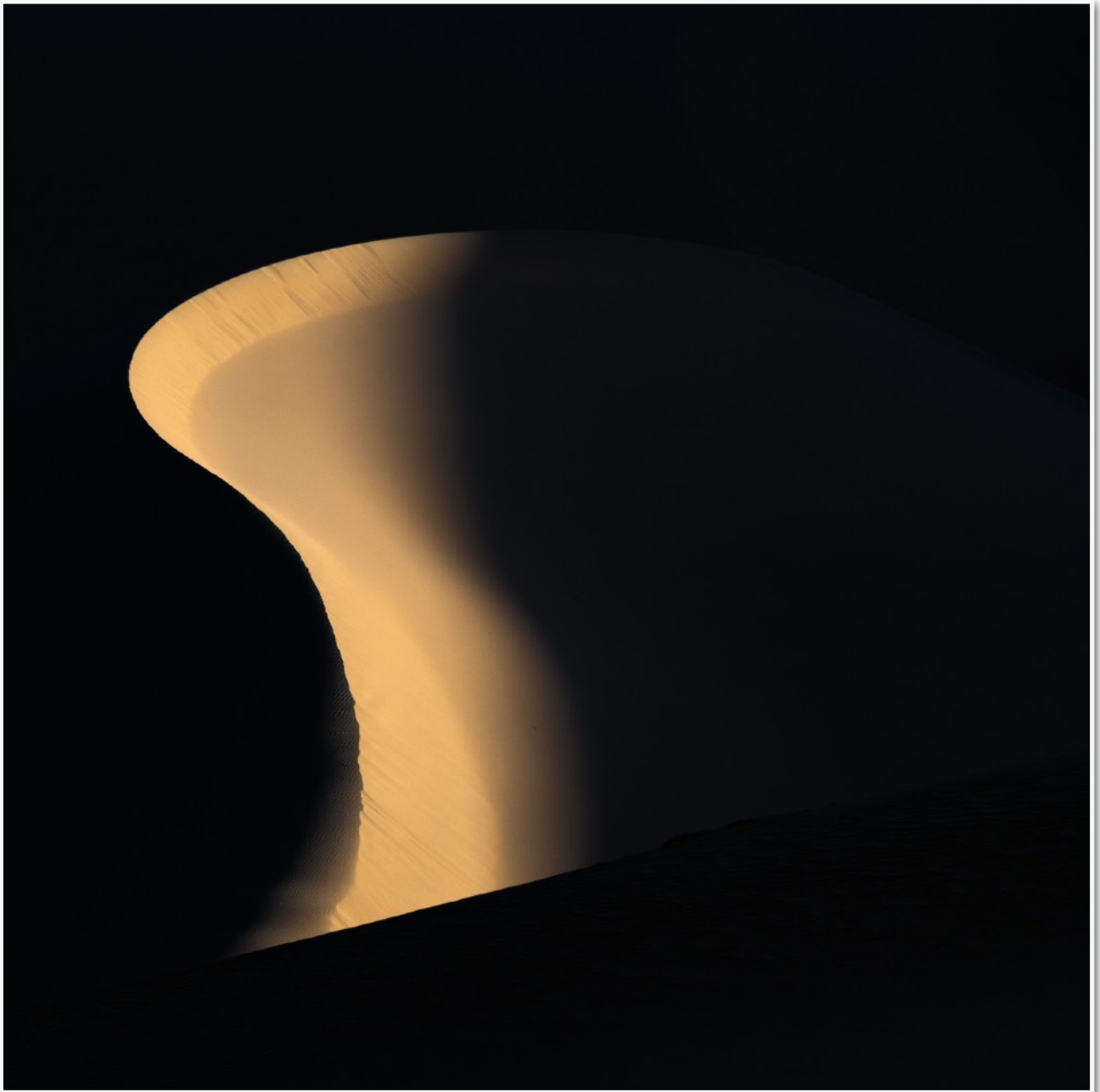
Or we can have expectations of our own performance when we're out.

- Come on Alister, you should know how to expose/focus/change aperture/shutter speed by now!
- I can't get that filter into the right slot
- This bag is heavy, I'm exhausted
- I just can't find any compositions today

Finally we can have expectations about how others will receive our photographs.

- I love this image, I hope others like it too
- I'd have thought this image would have got more likes than this

Expectations will kill your creativity



"Alister Benn is one of the very few photography educators working today who merges the how & why so seamlessly. Weaving philosophy, psychology, intuition and personal development into the creative process, all with a sense of humour and humility." Dave Emmerson

The next barrier is **EXTERNAL JUDGEMENT**

Following other people's rules and guidelines as to what makes a good photograph: More or less trying to live up to their expectations.

On one hand we have so called experts who say your images are no good if they don't follow a set of acceptable standards. Then there is the general audience who may, or may not like your photographs.

All I will say about external validation at this point is to ask you one question. If you have a favourite song that means a great deal to you, it speaks to you and makes you feel very special; would you care if a random stranger on the internet didn't like it?

No, of course you wouldn't care, you may tell them to mind their own business; the song is special to you and that's all that matters.

Then why do we let that happen with our photographs?

Your special photographs are like your favourite songs; they're yours, and your relationship with them is personal.

Making images to suite someone else's taste is like letting them tell you what music you have to listen to.

External Judgement will kill your creativity



How to dissolve barriers?

The first thing to know is that the vast majority of them only exist in our own head, we tell ourselves things and believe them, even when we know they are not true!

Creativity is the product of a state of mind, not a series of predictable actions. You cannot will yourself to be creative, but you

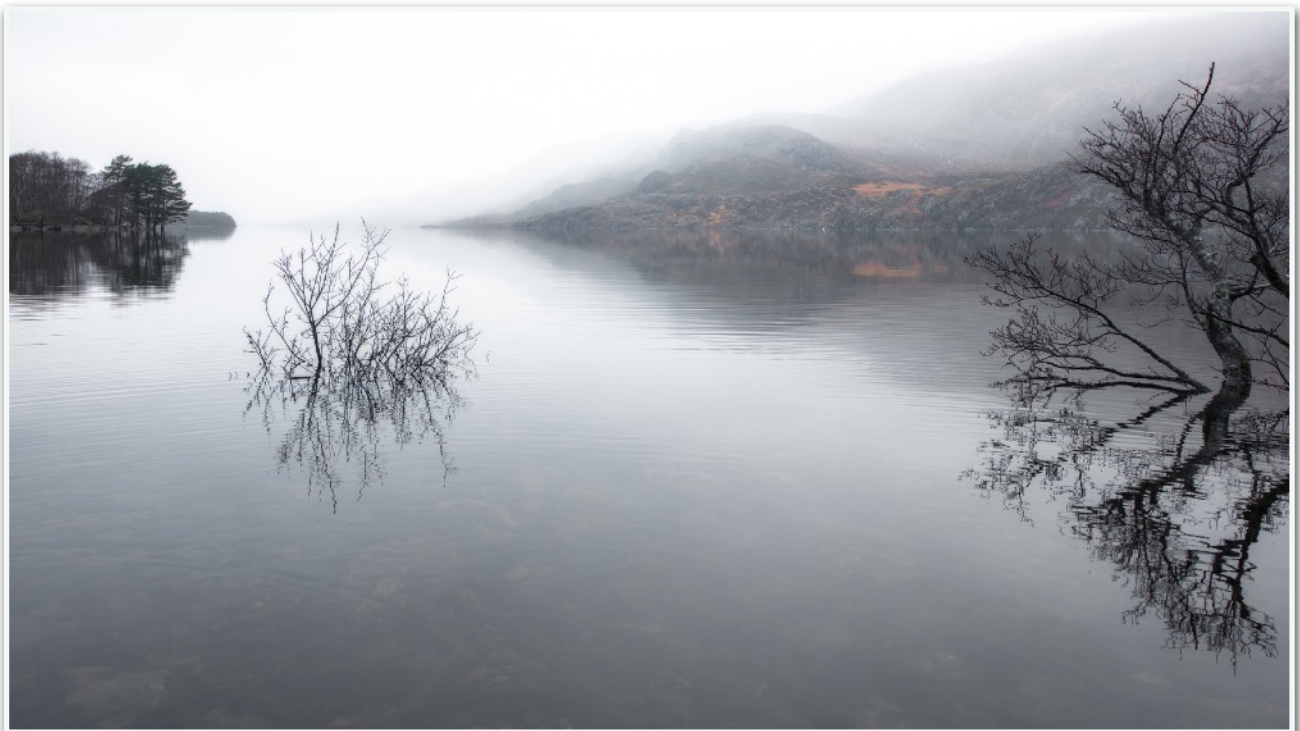
can cultivate behaviours and a mindset that allow creativity to become second nature to you. Art & craft are not the same thing.

Dealing with expectations.

Expectations are great when they take place. We feel that rush of satisfaction that we planned to be in the right place at the right time, and we were. It's how we deal with situations when expectations aren't met that define us.

In my experience, I make my very best photographs when I just accept what is happening at the time and make shots that speak to me. Moody, overcast light can be excellent for articulating calmness, quiet contemplation and introspection. I don't believe it's written anywhere that all photographs have to be dramatic and taken in killer light.

Allow the landscape to tell you what to shoot, it knows what it's talking about!

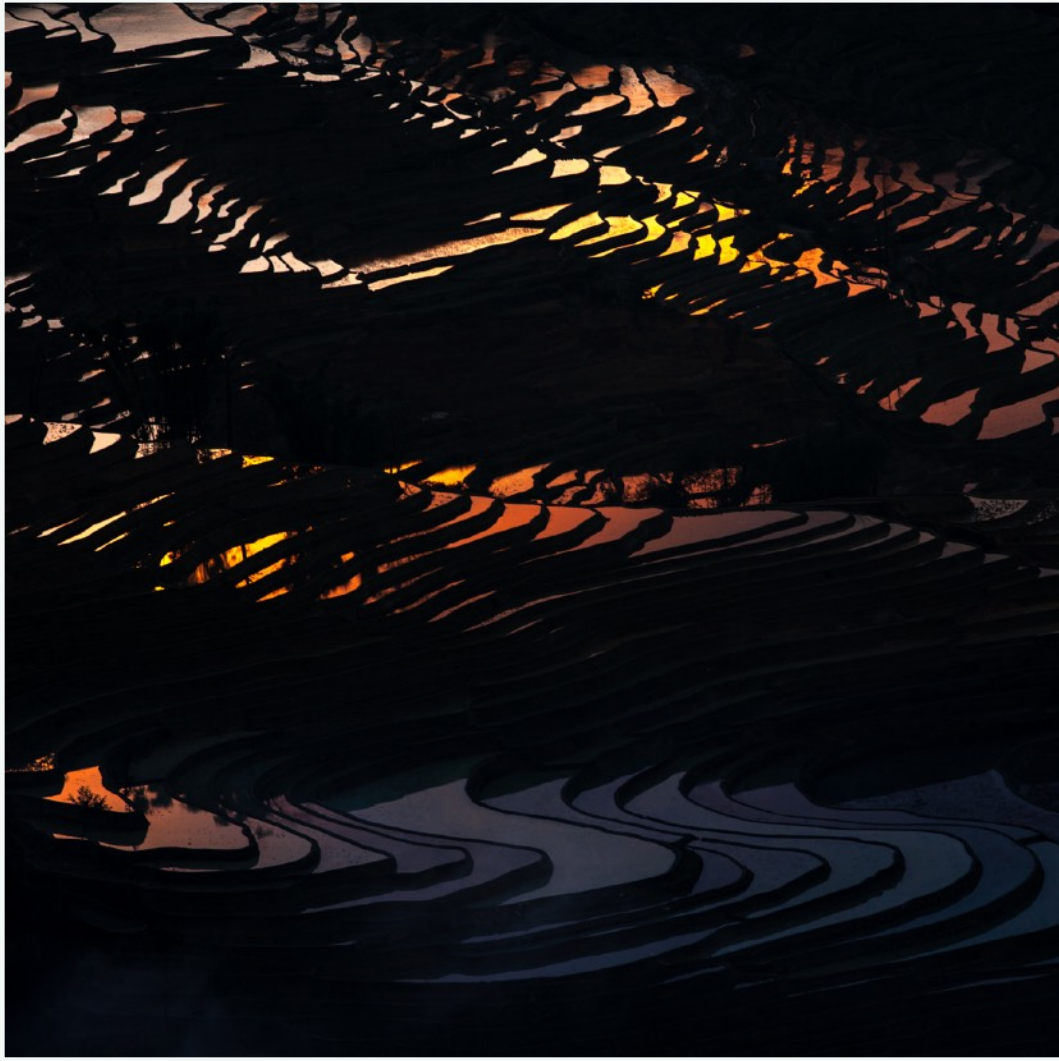


Dealing with External Judgement.

It is my belief that this factor has done the most harm to photography and photographers in the last 15 years. Making images that we think will satisfy other people, or we only believe have value if someone else says so, are cast iron ways to kill your creativity and your self-confidence.

The purpose of all my learning material is to make you the boss of your own creativity. You are unique, with valid opinions, beliefs values and ideas of beauty. I cannot teach you how to be creative, I don't know what your creativity looks like. Step up and show me.





Dealing with you own personal barriers.

The first thing to accept is that we all have issues; we all have a cage that we've built for ourselves. Some things can be buried pretty deep, or have been with us so long, we believe they are just a part of who we are. I can tell you that isn't true. It isn't true for me, as I have overcome many things I thought were hard wired, and it isn't true for my clients with whom I have worked and they too have overcome some serious issues of self-doubt, anxiety, depression, or lack of self-worth.

Photography is a key to unlock the door to our true self, the person deep inside who's voice is valid, whose emotions are real, whose opinions are unique.

I'll leave you with one beautiful thought. You know how all snowflakes are unique? This is because every one forms in clouds on their own path to the ground.

Each human has their own path. You can be born the same day to the kid next door, grow up on the same street and hang out all the time. But, you're not the same, even if you share many of the same values, goals and beliefs. No-one sees through your eyes, only you can make the images in your own mind.

Welcome to the **EXPRESSIVE REVOLUTION** taking back creativity for you.

In Part TWO of the FREE guide to The Secret of Creativity, I will introduce the **5 TRIGGERS OF ENGAGEMENT**, the things that make you stop the car, grab your camera and run to make a photograph.

SUMMARY

- Be kind to yourself
- Have fun with your photography
- If you weren't in nature with a camera what else would you be doing?
- Practice craft - the "how to" things
- Don't overthink creativity - let it flow
- You know what you like - believe it

