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# **TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY; TALKING ABOUT THE PRINT**

**FROM THE [jbhphoto.com](http://jbhphoto.com) BLOG**

**Collection #08-A  
10/2013**

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**MUSINGS, OPINIONS, COMMENTARY,  
HOW-TO AND GENERAL DISCUSSION  
ABOUT TRADITIONAL WET DARKROOM  
PHOTOGRAPHY TAKEN FROM THE PAGES  
OF THE [jbhphoto.com](http://jbhphoto.com) BLOG.**

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# Table of Contents

<b>CROPPING.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>MORE CROPPING.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FRAMED.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PRINTING NOTES &amp; CATALOG.....</b>	<b>5</b>

# CROPPING

This entry was posted on February 29, 2012.



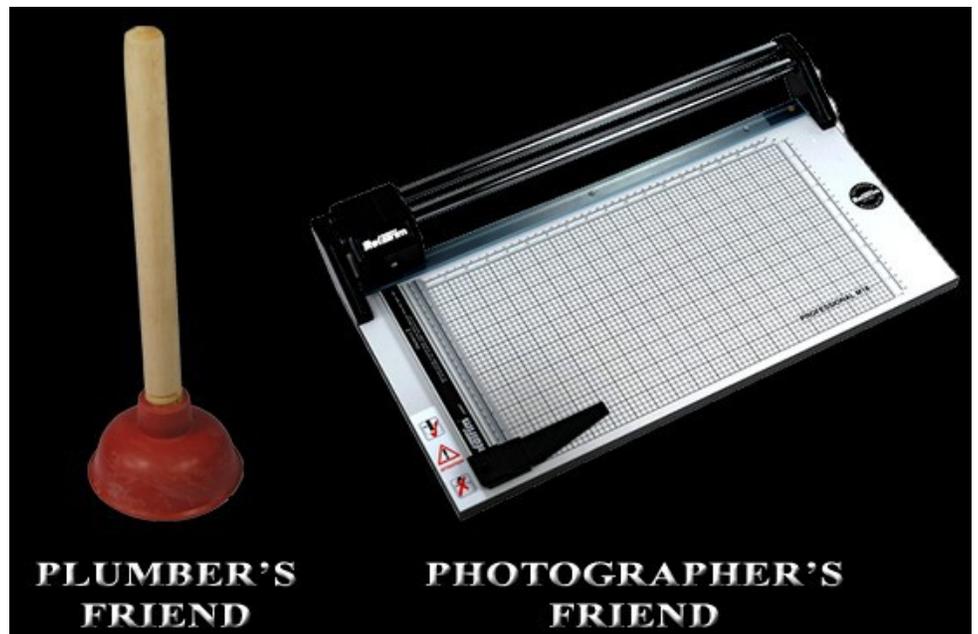
Those that dictate hard and fast, unwavering, rules for the creation of art usually are the vane, egotistical, self-centered types that are full of their own over-inflated view of their importance and try to tell you that cropping is an unforgivable sin. I say. . . Not True!

No one has the authority, nor the right, to tell you what, nor how, to create your art. Cropping is a personal decision, and can only be justified by you as an individual. If cropping helps any particular photograph, then it is no sin to proceed to crop away.

Cropping is best done in the camera at the time you make the negative, but it is not always possible. There will always be those instances that appropriate framing is just not possible in the field. Never pass up an opportunity just because the perfect image does not exactly fit the film. Keep cropping as an option. Do not dismiss anything that will help.

During the printing process look carefully at your first work print and determine if the image is strong from corner to corner. Use cropping L's to mask questionable edges of the image and determine if lopping off some of the image will strengthen it. If you are enlarging you can reset the easel and the print size. If you are contact printing, a rotary trimmer is your best friend. The choice is totally yours. Do not be a slave to others opinions. There are no rules. The decision is so eloquently expressed by Bob Segar: "What to leave in, what to leave out. . ."

If cropping does not improve the photograph, maybe it is a good idea to find another image that will be more expressive. If you do hit a brick wall with a photograph, save your work and put it aside for later. There are few



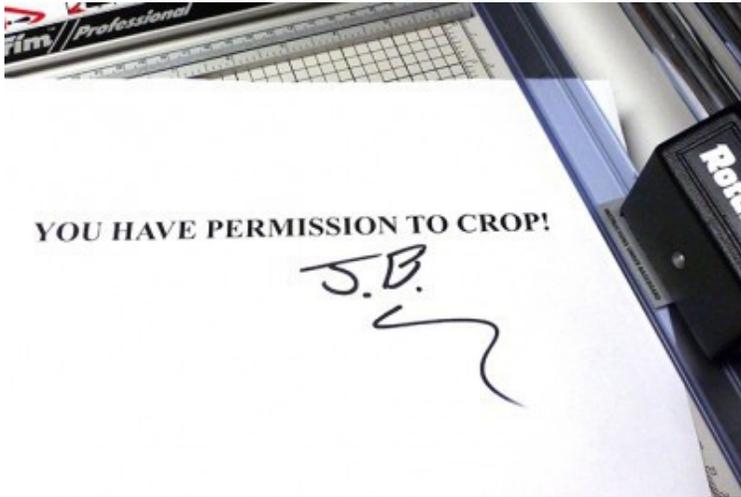
**negatives of questionable substance that are worth killing yourself in order to print. You are usually better off to concentrate on those that are not a struggle to print.**

**It is easier on you and more productive, and less frustrating, to make negatives that are well-seen and easy to print. A mastery of craft will make everything work more smoothly, but never let anyone tell you that you should not, cannot, crop your photograph. Just don't go there! Cropping can be your best friend.**

**JB**

# MORE CROPPING

This entry was posted on October 13, 2012.



I had made an [earlier post](#) on the merits of cropping your image and the subject has come up again. I will stick to my original thoughts on the process of cropping. Use it if necessary!

I ran onto an article by David Vestal published in an old Photo Techniques magazine from 2002 that seems to sum things up very well.

*“Some people say that we should never crop photos. They’re wrong. When cropping will help the picture, it’s better to crop it than to*

*leave it uncropped. If it doesn’t help the picture, then why bother? But it is an option, and it’s not a moral issue. We don’t need anyone’s permission. If you do it, do it well.” \**

**I couldn’t have said it better. . . thank you Mr. Vestal!**

**JB**

*\* David Vestal, Advanced B&W Printing, Photo Techniques Magazine, 2002*

## FRAMED

This entry was posted on December 30, 2010.



We recently had an interesting conversation with a local gallery curator and found that we unanimously agreed on one thing. Most art and all photography should be displayed in the most simple manner possible. Nothing is more distracting, and annoying, than an obnoxious presentation. Large, gaudy, frames with funky colored mats are just plain ugly. Our approach is to keep the presentation simple. The framing and mat should be completely transparent. It should only exist to isolate and protect the photograph. If you notice the frame and mat before you see the image, it is just not right. The KISS Principle (Keep It Simple Stupid) is the only way to display photographic art.

For us, you will not find any of our prints mounted and matted with anything other than pure white, acid free mat board. If we frame for exhibition, we use narrow black aluminum frames. The only other frame we would consider would be narrow natural finish maple. Our first choice for glazing would be glass, with acrylic as the second choice. That is it. Anything else is just plain gaudy and unnecessary.

So, just in case anyone is interested in the materials we use, here is a list;

- Light Impressions Westminster Bright White Buffered 100% Cotton Rag 4-Ply
- Frame Fit Co. Crestline Satin Black 9/32" Aluminum Frame plus Hardware
- Art Guard Glazing Products Plain Clear 2.5mm glass
- Wire & Cable Specialist SoftStrand Picture Hanging Wire #4

Those are the basic materials you will need. It is a good idea for you to learn to mount, mat, and frame your own photos. You should learn to cut your own mats. A Logan Simplex mat cutter is not excessively expensive and will serve you well for cutting simple window mats. The most expensive piece of equipment you need will be a good dry mount press. The Seal 210M is the workhorse of mount presses. Watch the auction sites and buy used, a Seal mount press will last a lifetime. This equipment is not extremely expensive and will pay for itself quickly. You will save a bundle of money and will have 100% control over the display of your art.

For more information, take a look at these articles; "[DRY MOUNTING PHOTOGRAPHS](#)" and "[ADJUSTING THE DRY MOUNT PRESS](#)" on our web site.

Remember, when it comes to displaying your art. . . simple. . . consistent. . . non-intrusive. . . is the look you want. If you are going to get framed, be sure to think simple!

JB

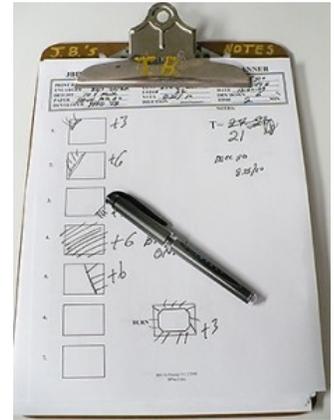
# PRINTING NOTES & CATALOG

This entry was posted on August 18, 2010.

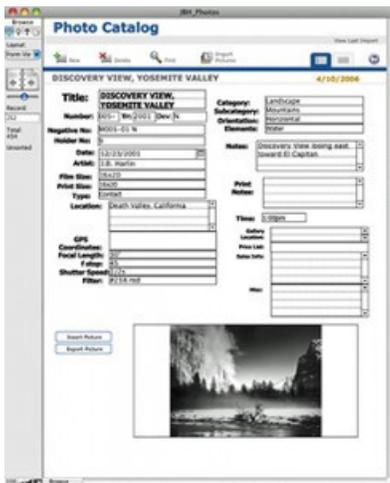


In the last entry I talked about making film notes in the field. That is the first step in the process of record keeping. I didn't mention the last step which is negative storage. Each negative is marked on one edge with a unique number, then inserted into a clear sleeve then into an archival envelope. Each envelope has the negative number written on the upper edge. The envelopes are then placed into archival boxes, which are labeled with the contents. Also, the smaller film is proofed on our standard paper. These proof sheets are punched, and filed in binders. That pretty much sums up the negative end of the process.

The next step is printing, and yes, we keep notes on the printing process. As each print is worked out in the darkroom, we have printed sheets that we use to record the process. We make our own print planner sheets using the computer to document every step in the darkroom. Our print planner sheets have spaces to record all pertinent information for the creation of a finished print.



It includes the negative number and date, along with the print date, printing paper, developer, enlarger settings and such. The print planner sheet also has a series of boxes to record exposure manipulations. . . burning and dodging. That way if we ever need to go back and reprint, we have a record of exactly how we made the first prints. These sheets are filed in a three ring binder and labeled for future reference if needed.



We also keep a computer database which contains our catalog of available photographs. This database contains all of the information from the film and printing notes. The master catalog database also contains information on the number of prints available, price, and exhibition information.

I am sure this all sounds extremely complicated, and I have to admit that if you ever get behind on the record keeping, it would be near impossible to ever catch up. The secret is to continually and consistently keep the records up to date. When we are on the road, the first order of business in the evening, after dinner, is to update the day's notes and log. Once we get home, the next order of business is to get the film notes done. This has to be done in order to sort the film before development. Our catalog database allows us to keep track of what we have in the way of photographs and serves as a place to search for information when needed.

If you continually keep up with your film notes and records you will always have a way to see where you have been and maybe an aid to where you go next. Is it worth it? We would not do it if we thought otherwise!

JB

Each volume of **TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY** is derived from years of past writing on the jbhphoto.com BLOG. These are short articles about advanced wet darkroom, film and view camera techniques. Each volume contains selected writings about a specific topic.

Is all of the information contained in this installment of **TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY** too technical or advanced for you?

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