

Processing

Overview

In order to get the best out of your digital photos they need to be "treated" or "processed".

We shoot "RAW" images, which are the digital equivalent of negatives and its the processing of these files that produces the final image. Raw images can only be viewed by professional editing software - (and can be given to any professional designer) - so in order for you to view the images we can supply jpegs, which can be viewed on most computers. However we like to be involved in the process of choosing the final images - as often RAW files will appear too light or too dark or will have other aspects that are off-putting to the untrained eye - when in fact all of these things can be adjusted, corrected or "fixed".

What is processing?

The digital negatives are adjusted using software (we use "lightroom" and "photoshop"). There are several stages:-

- 1) The colour and contrast are tweaked, the photos verticals and horizontals are straightened.
- 2) If necessary a couple of images are combined to give detail in the shadows or highlights where none is present in a single shot. (See the bottom picture on this page).
- 3) In studio shoots the background is removed or cleaned.
- 4) The photos are processed to give a specific look and feel.

Why is it so important?

Processing defines the look and feel of the photo; it can enhance an existing characteristic of a scene, to help capture a mood that is often missing in a photograph. In the digital age this is what separates photographers: to a large extent it IS photography - taking the photos is just the first step of the process. This is why we don't like handing over the digital negatives without any processing.



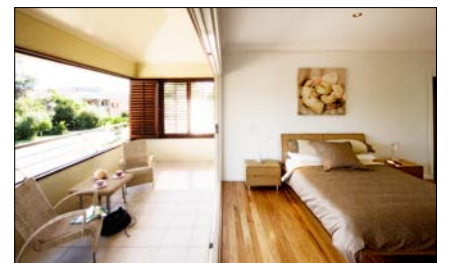
above and right: before and after



The original



1st stage "processing" - contrast and saturation are adjusted, the photo is "straightened". It takes 5-30 minutes per photo. (Combining 2 photos is often fiddly - its this that can take 30 mins).



2nd stage "processing" - generally for accommodation providers. A "style" is applied: this can be a diffuse glow and grain (pictured), or a colour cast, selective blurring, darkening, and digital removal. It takes 20-60 minutes per photo.



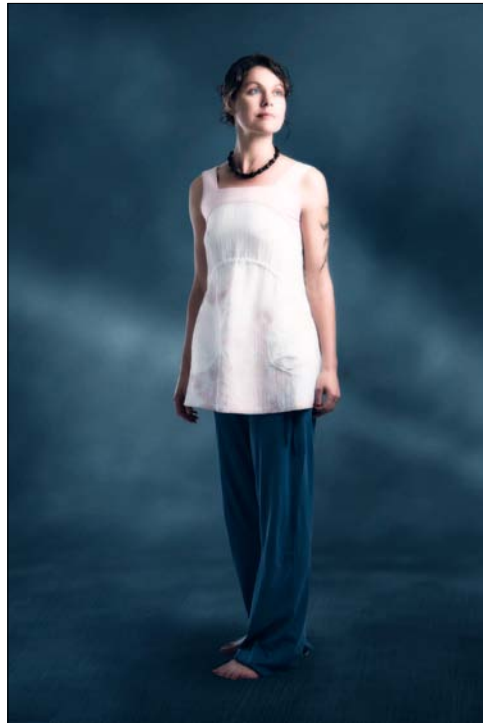
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Combining exposures so the photo more closely resembles what the eye sees.



above and right: adding a digital backdrop



Why does it take so long?

Each photograph is generally treated individually - sometimes we can do several steps of the process automatically, but we always need to finish off each one by hand. Sometimes we'll develop a specific style for you - this can take hours, and then implementing that with each photo can take 15 or 50 minutes depending on the complexity of what is needed.

Is it worth it?

Having quality photographs can often say more about your the thing you are selling business or organisation than the content of the photos! Where the consumer is highly visually literate (ie just about everyone!) then they will react and make decisions (often subconsciously) on the impression or mood that is created by the presentation. This is why we spend a lot of time processing and "tweaking" the final images.

Can we choose a style?

Yes! If you have a strong idea of what you need it is important to communicate this before the photoshoot - especially if you have not seen a similar style in our portfolio. Eg bring us examples of what you like. See our Choosing a Style FAQ

more examples on the next page...

If you are choosing the photographs yourself:

Try to bear in mind when selecting your shots that the overall darkness, contrast and saturation of each photo can be changed. Also if an area of the shot is dark it can be lightened (and vice versa) - so an interior shot where the windows are bleached-out can be changed to show the outside scene. If you find yourself thinking "I like this shot but its a bit dark" then don't worry! Nine times out of ten that can be adjusted - let us know if you have those concerns about shots you like. We also employ a few tricks to give depth to the photo and to add a bit of polish.

Why are the photos too dark/too light?

We auto-process all the photos first, then select the photos for final processing. If you are viewing these first files, some photos will appear too light, some too dark - they are almost always "correctable".

Why are there 3 virtually identical versions of each shot?

We "bracket" the exposure for each shot to ensure that all the highlights and shadows are captured. Digital photos are very good at dealing with a lot of contrast, but sometimes you need more than one shot to - for instance - capture details in clouds on a bright day. Most professional designers will be able to combine several photos to get that range.

Why are the photos distorted?

We frequently use a very wide angle lens (which gives a great sense of depth, and to capture a confined space). If the lens is pointed up the verticals will tilt dramatically toward the centre of the picture (and vice versa pointing down). A small amount of distortion can be corrected by an experienced photoshop user.

Why are the photos not straight?

Similarly, a small shift from horizontal produces a large shift in rotation. Again this can be corrected.

Studio shoots: Why is there clutter in the frame?

On studio shoots the background is usually removed. To do this it is only necessary for the backdrop to be behind the model (or the item being photographed). It is sometimes necessary to include things in photo in order to get the correct framing - but these can be removed later.



Original



Processed shot

This shot illustrates 3 common real estate tweaks:

- 1) Notice how the edges of the window converge slightly? This is due to using wide angle lenses. Most real estate photographers don't bother correcting this; we think it looks sloppy - and even if you don't notice it consciously the photo will look more professional if its corrected.
- 2) Two photos merged to make the view visible through the window
- 3) Selected focus used - blurring up the foreground lets people concentrate on what's important in the image



This apartment looked best with the lights on, but there were many windows. Daylight and artificial light have very different colours, so the colour balance was tweaked carefully. The photo had a vignette and slight edge-blurring were added to darken the edges and draw the eye in, and a shot was added to the TV.

Our workflow (for Real Estate, Architecture and Accommodation):

- We work out what you need and discuss presentation (see out Presentation FAQ).
- We travel to the shoot and take the photos
- We look at ALL the photos taken and discard the obvious duds
- We assign a star rating to the remainder based on the visual impact, and how well they fit the brief.
- We do a "quick process" on these shots (eg fix colour and contrast).
- IF YOU HAVE STIPULATED BEFOREHAND (and at extra cost) we supply these to you - usually about three times the number that you'll likely need, and then help you to choose the best shots for your purposes, otherwise...
- We select the best shots and do the final processing on those.

If you are choosing the photos yourself...
See the FAQ on the previous page