

NEWSLETTER

# MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



WINTER 2023



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WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER

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*Cover Image: The NASA Artemis 1 launch that took place at 1:47 AM on Wednesday November 16, 2022 at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. Opposite Page: A portrait of Daniel Coriz, a motocross rider standing atop a jump, at the Santa Fe Motocross Track in Santa Fe, New Mexico.*







## Artemis

*Revvig up for 2023*

**T**his year, 2023, is already revving up to be an incredible year of adventures. Assignments have started filling up the spring calendar making this the busiest start to a year I have had since the start of the pandemic in 2020. This will hopefully also be the year that I start traveling internationally again. As usual, I will keep you updated on all of my adventures here in the Newsletter with in-depth articles on recent assignments and new equipment.

This issue of the Newsletter is aimed at some seminal adventures from 2022. As the image on the cover and the next page indicates, I had the supreme honor of photographing the NASA Artemis 1 launch this past fall. I have been a space nerd since I was a kid. When I was young I was starving for adventure and I was a dreamer, who wanted to be an astronaut, a professional tennis player or a pro photographer. I made one of those happen but to turn my career towards another dream from my youth by working with NASA was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. It was a surreal experience to photograph the launch and then see images created by the remote cameras on the Orion spacecraft with the moon in the foreground and the Earth beyond.

Additionally, last fall I was lucky enough to work with Elinchrom and MAC Group, who sent me the latest

battery-powered strobe to put through its paces. The new Elinchrom FIVE is a powerful and capable strobe for those that need an all in one option. On a very short deadline I was able to work with some stellar athletes to create ad images for the new product and here in this issue of the Newsletter I have included a full review.

Lastly, this issue of the Newsletter highlights upcoming workshops in Japan and ends with an editorial discussing the effect that Ai image generators might have on the photography industry. After nearly thirty years as a working professional photographer one thing is certain—change is a constant. We are in a new post-pandemic era and even without Ai images, the industry has changed and perhaps will never go back to how it was before the Covid-19 pandemic. As usual, it is yet again time to adapt to the new normal. Thanks again for checking out the Newsletter. Here's hoping you enjoy this issue and it offers up an escape for an hour or two. Until next time....

*Opposite Page: The Artemis 1 Rocket on Launch Pad 39b at Kennedy Space Center on Cape Canaveral near Titusville, Florida.*

**Recent Clients:** Amazon, Red Bull, Fujifilm, National Geographic, Teton Ridge, Elinchrom, MAC Group, New Mexico Tourism, and The Templeton Foundation.





## Center Santa Fe 2023 Photo Programs

*Applications Open for a variety of photography grants and sponsorships*



**CALLS FOR ENTRY**  
\$5,000 PROJECT GRANTS • AWARDS • REVIEW SANTA FE

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**CENTER** Santa Fe announces their annual Calls for Entry for their international photographic awards, project grants, and flagship program, the Review Santa Fe Photo Symposium. One of the longest-standing photographic organizations in the U.S., entering its 29th year, the not-for-profit organization provides \$16,000 in project grants, awards, exhibition, featured publications, and the internationally renowned professional development conference, the Review Santa Fe Photo Symposium.

NEW THIS YEAR! CENTER is expanding our support to lens-based projects to include the Blue Earth Fiscal Sponsorship. Supporting environmental and socially engaged projects, CENTER is accepting lens-based project proposals allowing photographers to seek grants and tax-deductible donations as part of the 2023 Calls for Entry.

Open to lens-based images and multimedia projects, CENTER welcomes photographers and artists worldwide to explore the ten opportunities to have their work seen and supported by CENTER in 2023. Discounted entry fees are available through February 15, and applicants have until the final deadline of March 15 to submit their work. Here is the list of ten grants and sponsorships available to photographers looking for support:



1. **\$5,000 PROJECT LAUNCH GRANT** • Supports a complete or nearly complete series with project funding, winners exhibition, Review Santa Fe admission, publications, and more.

2. **\$5,000 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT GRANT** • Supports a work-in-progress with project funding, winners exhibition, Review Santa Fe admission, publications, and more.

3. **\$1,000 ME&EVE GRANT** • Supports a female, transgender, or non-binary photographer who is over 40 with project funding, exhibition, Review Santa Fe admission, and more.

4. **EXCELLENCE IN MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLING AWARD** • Recognizes outstanding storytellers using lens-based media to create narrative-driven projects with a winners exhibition, Review Santa Fe admission, publications, and more.

5. **PERSONAL AWARD** • Recognizes outstanding work engaging in the exploration, expression, and the power of self-representation and underrepresented experiences with a winners exhibition, Review Santa Fe admission, publications, and more.

6. **SOCIAL AWARD** • Recognizes outstanding work engaged in social issues with a winners exhibition, Review Santa Fe admission, publications, and more.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD** • Recognizes outstanding work focusing on the state of the ecological environment with a winners exhibition, Review Santa Fe admission, and more.

8. **\$5,000 CALLANAN EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD** • Honors an educator's dedication and commitment to their students and field with funding, Review Santa Fe admission, a CENTER Supporting Level Membership, and more.

9. **BLUE EARTH FISCAL SPONSORSHIP** • Supports environmental and socially engaged projects with a 1-year fiscal sponsorship, Review Santa Fe admission, and more.

10. **REVIEW SANTA FE PHOTO SYMPOSIUM** • Juried portfolio reviews for photographers and lens-based artists seeking audience expansion, critical discussion, and community connection. Scheduled for November 16-19, 2023, in historic downtown Santa Fe, NM.

The early deadline to submit and receive discounts on entry fees is 02.15.23; the final submission deadline is 03.15.23. For more information on the guidelines and jurors, go to [VisitCenter.org](https://www.visitcenter.org).

**ABOUT CENTER SANTA FE:** CENTER ([visitcenter.org](https://www.visitcenter.org)) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, founded in 1994 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, that supports socially and environmentally engaged lens-based projects through education, public platforms, funding, and partnerships. For 29 years, CENTER has helped visual storytellers across the globe reach audiences with their mission-driven projects.

I have known the folks at CENTER for quite a while since I am based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. They have started and propelled quite a few careers. Hence, if you need support on your photo project check out the options.



## workshops

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# Photography Workshops

*An overview of workshops and online classes with Michael Clark*

**E**ach year I teach a few workshops on a variety of topics including adventure sports photography, digital workflow and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the workshops I will be teaching in 2023. For more information on these workshops, and to find out how to register, go to the [Workshops](#) page on my blog or click on the links in the descriptions below.

### **JAPAN: THE ART OF MOTION**

*Nobechi Creative - Multiple Locations in Japan*

*May 16-25, 2023*

Not just a travel photo tour, not just a workshop, but a unique opportunity to photograph Japan in Motion: Martial artists, sumo wrestling, traditional performers, bustling cities, bullet trains and more to create a strong, dynamic body of work that will have your friends and colleagues in awe of your photography, while learning invaluable lighting techniques courtesy of Michael, and diving deeply into the beautiful Japanese culture through George.

Japan is a country constantly on the move. With the fastest bullet trains in the world, and sports old and new, there are ample opportunities to create ambitious images of both the modern and ancient Japanese culture in motion. In this photography workshop with Michael Clark

and George Nobechi we will push ourselves to create dynamic images that impart motion into the world of still photography. Using a combination of natural light and artificial lighting techniques (not to worry if you are new to lights—Michael and George will be there to help you), incorporating motion blur, and featuring both fast-moving and slower-moving action, we will set up a wide variety of scenarios to practice and produce stunning images.

Michael has spent the entirety of his career capturing images of athletes in motion in remote locations for some of the most prestigious clients in the World including Apple, Nike, Nikon, Fujifilm, Red Bull, Nokia, National Geographic, Sports Illustrated and many more. In Japan we will adapt his techniques to a wide variety of traditional sports, performances, culture and events in stunning locations. The aim of this workshop is to craft images that are dramatic, unusual and out of the norm—images that stand out and grab the viewer's attention but are unmistakably Japanese.

We will start with a few days in Tokyo, where we have a dynamic variety of locations planned: everything from bullet trains whooshing by to sumo wrestlers in the ring on a tournament day to motion under the neon signs at night.



*Image from the Fushimi Inari Taisha near Kyoto, Japan. Even though we won't be going to the Fushimi Inari Taisha, Japan offers some incredible photographic opportunities and in Japan: The Art of Motion workshop we will explore the possibilities of capturing athletes, martial artists and actors performing in the landscape.*

For the second part of the workshop we will travel to the beautiful countryside town of Takayama, known for its well-preserved old streets to work with martial artists and traditional performers. Through out the workshop we will have plenty of time to really get creative and explore the possibilities in each location, while also taking most meals together and enjoying the amazing food Japan has to offer.

Michael will also share his extensive knowledge of digital workflow and show participants how he works up his images to a very high level. Each day will find us on location capturing powerful images in addition to image critiques,

discussions on various techniques, and thinking through the types of images we hope to create that day.

Michael first visited Japan in May of 2019 and enjoyed the country so much he immediately hatched the idea to coordinate with George on creating this unique workshop.

George, with his extensive knowledge of Japan and its culture, will be our guide to help us stay true to the traditions and also dial in our experience so that we come away with incredible images. George will also instruct you in filling out your Japan portfolio with carefully

crafted landscapes, environmental portraits and still-life shooting around the main workshop photography led and taught by Michael.

\*\*\*All lighting equipment will be provided by Elinchrom and Michael will be there to help fine tune and set up the lighting for all participants.

Class size: Limited to 8 participants

Tuition: Cost per person, double occupancy: \$7,995 for bank wire transfer +\$240 for payment by credit card. Cost per person, single occupancy: \$8,895 for bank wire transfer + \$270 for payment by credit card.

For more information and to register for this workshop visit the [Nobechi Creative website](#).

## **JAPAN: FALL COLORS OF SHINSHU AND HIDA**

*Nobechi Creative - Multiple Locations in Japan*

*October 20-29, 2023*

Join world-renowned photographer and instructor Michael Clark and creative director/photographer George Nobechi in an all-new photographic road trip adventure through the mountainous Shinshu and Hida regions of Japan during the glorious autumn. This special, nine-night journey is limited to a maximum of 8 participants with Michael and George via private van.

Our expedition will begin in Tokyo on the morning of Thursday, October 20th. There, we will board the Nagano Shinkansen (Bullet Train) to zip northwest to the beautiful mountain resort community of Karuizawa, a little over one hour from Tokyo. Karuizawa is the headquarters for

Nobechi Creative and the location for the new Karuizawa Foto Fest (kff) starting in 2023. As a bonus, photographs you make in Karuizawa will be eligible for submission for the free call-for-entry. Located at over 1,000m (3,300ft) above sea level on the southeastern slopes of Mount Asama, Karuizawa is full of hidden waterfalls, reflective ponds, forests, and sweeping vistas. Michael will teach you how to “light-paint” your subjects as well as photograph mountain landscapes.

Our journey will continue north over the mountains to the Jigokudani Monkey Park, home to the Japanese macaques in surroundings of fall color, and then on to the castle town of Matsumoto, home to the famed and rare black castle, a designated national treasure.

From Matsumoto, we will drive south to the Kiso Valley, the historic home of the Kiso Kaido / Nakasendo Trail that connected the capital city of Edo (present-day Tokyo) to the old capital of Kyoto. This area is full of the best-preserved “post-towns” of the Nakasendo Trail, retaining the ambiance of the good old days of the Edo period. In addition to photographing the beautiful towns, we will work on portraiture here with natural and artificial light.

Our next stop takes us into Kamikochi, a stunning, high-elevation area within the Japanese Alps known for its alpen color, but also for its spiritual ponds with shinto shrines. Kamikochi does not allow private vehicles of any kind, making it a very quiet, beautiful slice of mountain paradise.

Our final destination will be a short drive to the west, to neighboring Gifu Prefecture and the quaint town of





*A steep staircase from the Kimpusen-ji temple that leads down to the Noten-okami temple in Yoshino National Park near Nara, Japan. The Fall Colors of Shinshu and Hida workshop will have dozens of fascinating mountainous locations like this that we will visit and photograph.*

Takayama. With our many local friends and connections there, we will be spending an intense few days making environmental portraits of martial artists, sake brewers, miso makers, ceramicists and Buddhist monks.

The return journey to Tokyo will then begin with a picturesque train-ride south through Gifu Prefecture to Nagoya, where you will transfer on to the bullet train for the final leg of the journey back to Tokyo, with a chance to see Mount Fuji along the way if it is a clear day.

Class size: 6 to 8 people (Minimum 6 people required for the class to proceed.)

Deposit: A \$2,500 deposit will be required to secure a booking. Japan at this time is still not fully open to travelers from overseas. All travelers signing up for this trip must therefore enroll in travel insurance that includes trip cancellation insurance. The balance will be due 45 days before departure if Japan opens its borders. If Japan remains closed, your deposit will be refunded in full, minus \$100 in booking fees incurred from the credit card payment processing, or your deposit can be transferred to another workshop instead.

For more information and to register for this workshop visit the [Nobeichi Creative website](https://nobeichi.com).

## Workshop Testimonials

"Michael certainly knows his stuff. From Capture to Print: The Complete Digital Photographer's Workflow is delivered in an easy to follow and comprehensive manner that covers many things that you may not expect - such as how to choose proper lighting to view and evaluate your prints or what color shirt to wear when you're correcting images. I really appreciated that this is a pro workflow course delivered by a pro photographer. Michael is also a superb teacher, a superb communicator, who is welcoming and inviting of questions from all his participants. I took this workshop in June of 2020, using Zoom software. I was really amazed by how Michael made it seem like he's been doing these workshops forever this way! It was a great pleasure being part of this workshop with so many other amazing photographers. I learned much which is valuable to me and enjoyed doing so at the same time. And just to reiterate, as to the workshop: I'm impressed." - Stephen Starkman, Toronto

"Michael is the best instructor I have taken a workshop from." - Participant, Cutting-Edge Lighting Workshop

"Michael set an incredibly high bar for his workshop. He gave 110%, covered a broad range of topics and did an outstanding job." - Chris Council, Adventure Photography Workshop

"Within the short time I've been studying and practicing photography, I have had teachers who are good educators, but not great photographers, and vice versa, but few who are both. Count yourself in these narrow ranks. I went through four years of college and several careers getting less candid advice and encouragement than I got

in four days with you. For what it is worth, thank you for that." - Brandon McMahon, Adventure Photography Workshop

"Thanks for running such a great workshop. I couldn't have chosen better photo shoot locations, and the post-shoot critiques were invaluable. It's the first time I've had my work reviewed, and I learned a ton from each session. While I didn't go into the workshop expecting to pick-up too many marketing and business tips, I've come out of last week inspired to set-up my photo website in earnest." - Jeff Hylok, Adventure Photography Workshop

"Your workshop at Santa Fe was too good and I came away with a lot of knowledge and renewed energy. The level of expertise that you and Michael shared was top-notch and I hope to repeat this experience again. Thanks for such a great workshop!" - Participant in the 2008 Balloon Fiesta workshop taught by Andy Biggs and myself.

"My mind is still spinning and I can't help but smile every time I think of the wonderful experience garnered from our workshop. Between what I learned from the two of you, as well as from my talented classmates - this was a great experience, and I would do it again." - Participant in the 2008 Balloon Fiesta workshop taught by Andy Biggs and I.

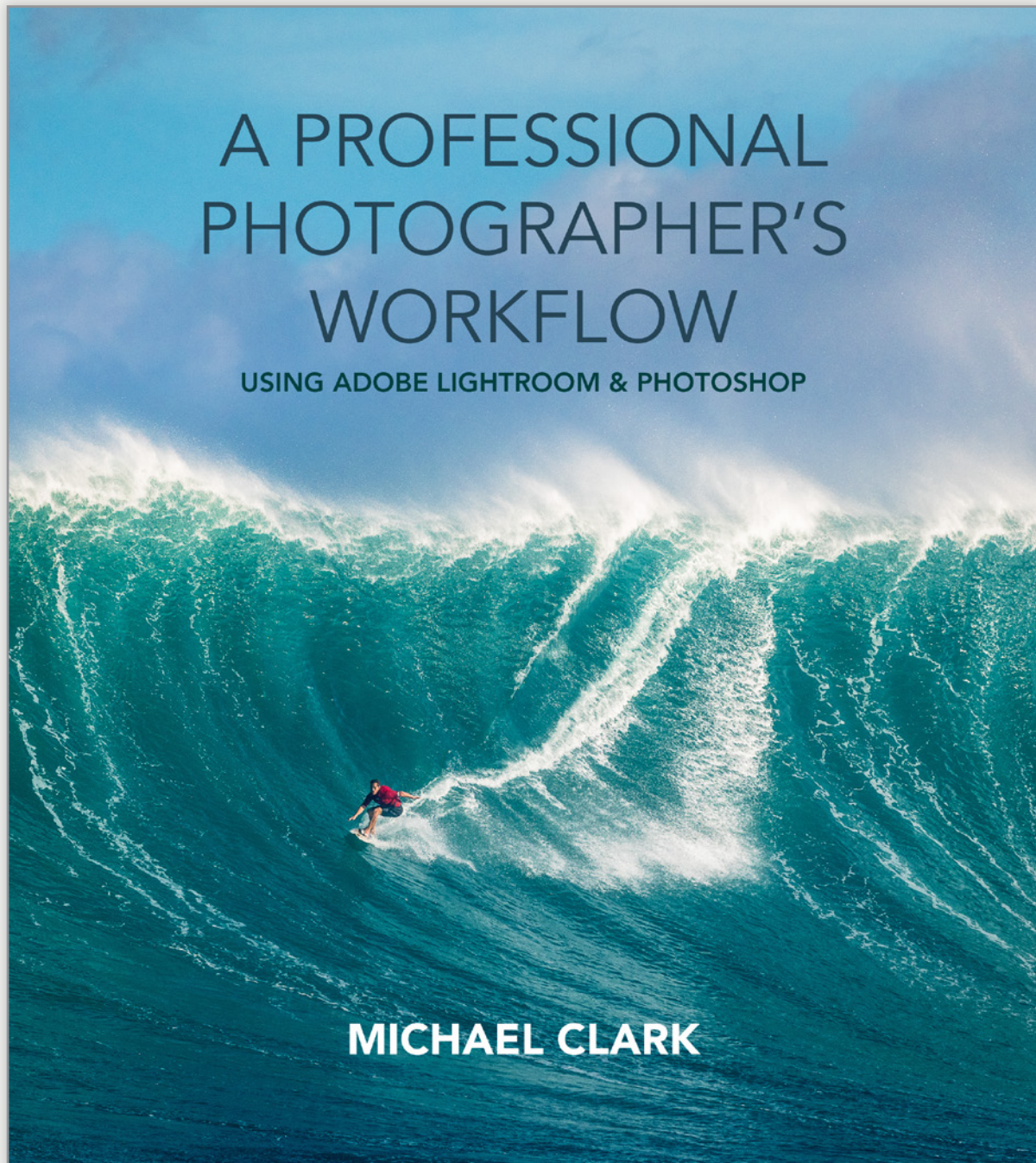
"Priceless chance to learn from the absolute best. Every photographer should take this class!" - Jill Sanders, The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow available on CreativeLIVE

For more information on my upcoming workshops please visit the [Workshops](#) page on my blog.



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## equipment review

# The Elinchrom FIVE

*A new monobloc 500Ws TTL battery-powered strobe*

*Disclaimer: I have been an ambassador for Elinchrom since 2007 and have worked with them very closely on several projects over the last fifteen years or more. Two Elinchrom FIVE strobes were given to me as part of the assignment for the launch. These are my opinions and I have not been paid to write this article. As usual, I will give my honest opinion here and compare this unit to existing previous options as well.*

Late last fall, I got a call from my good friends at MAC Group, who are the distributors here in the USA for Elinchrom. Elinchrom had a new strobe, that they alluded to in 2022, a 500 Watt-second monobloc “all-in-one” battery-powered strobe with TTL and HSS (High Speed Sync). As a long time Elinchrom brand Ambassador MAC Group wanted me to take the new FIVE out for a test drive and put them through the paces. I happily obliged and took two of these new strobes out to photograph rock climbing and motocross.

Elinchrom has had the ELB 500 TTL in the line up for

quite a while now, which has most of the same features as the new FIVE but market forces brought about the FIVE, with the battery built into the flash head and no separate power pack. The new FIVE has some new features that the ELB500 TTL did not have like active charging via a USB-C port, faster flash durations, and an even better optimized HSS system.



When I first got the FIVE, I weighed it to see if it is lighter than the ELB 500 TTL that I have had for a few years. The FIVE comes in at 6.8 lbs (3.08 Kg) total with the battery attached and the standard reflector while the ELB 500 TTL

comes in at 8.4 pounds (3.81 Kg) with the flash head, adapter and the power pack, making the new FIVE 1.6 pounds (0.73 Kg) lighter. The FIVE is perhaps a bit bulkier than the ELB 500 TTL was but they both fit into the same space in a camera bag—and you don’t need an adapter to fit larger soft boxes and light modifiers to the FIVE, which



*Amy Jordan on a route named Las Golondrinas (5.13-) at the El Camino Crag near Santa Fe, New Mexico. This image was created with two Elinchrom FIVE strobes in High Speed Sync (HSS) mode and two high performance reflectors focusing the light. FUJIFILM GFX100S, GF20-35mm lens, f/4 at 1/200th sec, ISO 1600.*

is very nice. For a photographer who has to carry strobes long distances (see the image above) that weight savings is very welcome.

Of course, with all of the weight in the flash head this makes the total weight of the strobe—with the light modifier attached—quite a bit heavier than with the smaller,

lighter ELB 500 TTL flash heads. Hence, you will need a beefy light stand to hold all of this safely and you will need either sand bags or weights to hold the stand steady, especially if working with the strobes outdoors. All of my light stands are tough, heavier stands these days so that isn't an issue but I just mention it here because this is certainly not a strobe to be used with wimpy, light weight





*This behind the scenes image shows the lighting setup for the rock climbing image shown on the previous page. To light the rock climber who was 100-feet (30 meters) away, I used two Elinchrom FIVE strobes in High Speed Sync (HSS) mode and two high performance reflectors to focus the light. Both strobes were placed right next to each other and were held steady by canvas bags filled with rocks. FUJIFILM GFX100S, GF20-35mm lens, f/5.6 at 1/400th sec, ISO 800.*

stands. This is no different than with other 500 Ws monobloc strobes made by other manufacturers.

In my testing, and while using the strobes on these two assignments, I found the High Speed Sync (HSS) to be incredibly efficient. Note that HSS is completely different in how it works compared to the HS (Hi-Sync) feature

found in the older Elinchrom ELB 1200. Hi-Sync is technically more powerful and more efficient than High Speed Sync, but for many photographers HS (Hi-Sync) is also much hard to figure out and use. Elinchrom seems to have optimized the HSS feature in the FIVEs to a degree I have not seen on any other strobe. It is very close to the same efficiency as HS (Hi-Sync) and much easier to use.





*Above are two product images of the new Elinchrom FIVE monoblocs. The battery hangs from the bottom of the strobe and with the press of a button detaches easily. The battery delivers 450 full power pops, which is incredible given its small size and light weight. To charge the battery you can either remove it or leave it in place and plug in a USB-C cable. Note that the unit can also be recharged while working, which makes this very versatile for studio use as well.*

My first assignment with the FIVEs was photographing rock climbing at a new crag here in New Mexico. The climber was about 100-feet away (30 meters) and 80-feet (25 m) off the ground. I set up both lights right next to each other because I knew that I would need both FIVEs to have enough power at that distance to overpower daylight. The cave was shaded but the background was in full sun. As can be seen on page 16 the two FIVEs easily overpowered daylight with both strobes in the HSS mode, which gave me a lot more confidence that we could pull off the image I wanted to create. Also, note both strobes were fitted with the High Performance reflectors as well to boost and focus the light.

The idea with the rock climbing shot was to wait until sunset to get some decent light in the sky behind the climber. Sadly, there were no clouds to reflect the last light so we had to make do with the clear purple-blue sky, which did make for a clean background. We also got lucky

with the rising half-moon just behind the climber as well.

For the second assignment with the FIVEs we worked with a motocross rider and created a mixture of portrait and action sequences to put the FIVE through the paces. We started off with a portrait as shown on page 3. For this portrait, the strobe was fairly far away from the rider due to the giant mound he was standing on with his bike. One FIVE with a high performance reflector was enough to overpower the strong afternoon light. For the next few setups capturing the action, we used both of the FIVE units either in a light trap (i.e. Pointed at each other) or together to get more light output. In all of these situations we were using the FIVE in the HSS mode.

For the image on the following page, we photographed Daniel Coriz (the rider) launching off a big jump. For this setup I had the two flash heads side by side (as shown on page 19) to get as much light as possible on the rider. I



*To capture this image of the motocross rider mid-air on a huge jump I used both Elinchrom FIVE strobes, placed right next to each other (as shown on the following page). Both strobes were in HSS (High Speed Sync) mode, which allowed me to darken the background. Nikon Z9, Nikkor Z 14-30mm lens, f/4 at 1/1,600th sec,*

was able to darken the background and the sky considerably to get a more dramatic image as shown above. In HSS mode, I used a fast shutter speed (in this case 1/1,600th sec.) to freeze the motion of the motocross rider at the top of his jump.

At the very end of the photo shoot, with the last light of

the day starting to fade, I also created some motion blur images on the big jump to test out the fast flash duration. At the lowest setting the flash duration is a wicked fast 1/8,080s at t0.1, which is comparable to 1/20,000th sec at t0.5. This motion blur image is featured in the Portfolio section of this Newsletter on pages 44-45. [Note that the t0.1 flash duration nomenclature is a much better and





*The above image shows how I had the lights set up for the image shown on the previous page. They were placed side by side. Note that I also had clear 4mm thick plastic taped to the front of the reflectors (using gaffer's tape) to protect the flash tubes from any rocks that might be thrown at the strobes.*

more accurate reflection of how fast the flash duration actually is when compared to the older t0.5 standard. It is great to see Elinchrom using the t0.1 measurement as it shows just how confident they are with this specification.]

Of course, there are quite a few things that make the

Elinchrom FIVE somewhat unique. First, as I said at the outset, Elinchrom has optimized the HSS mode to be incredibly efficient—more so than any other strobe I have tried. Second, the battery lasts for an amazing 450 shots at full power and you can plug in any external battery pack with a USB-C cable and power the strobe while using it, which makes this a very versatile strobe both





*The images above show how this portrait of Daniel standing atop a large jump was created. I used one Elinchrom FIVE with a high performance reflector on a tall lightstand. Since the light was fairly far away, the long throw reflector helped to concentrate the light on him and not light up the foreground.*

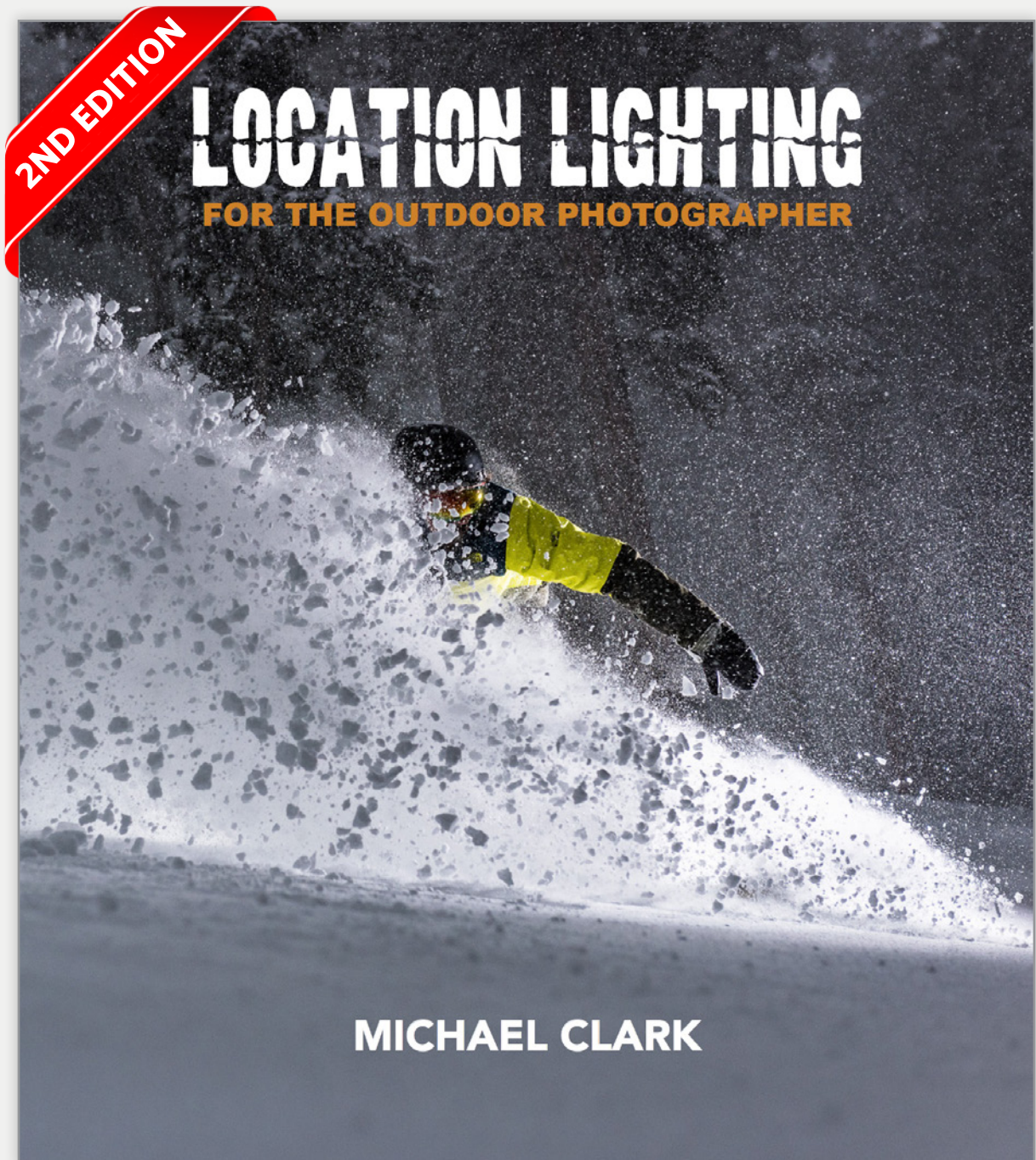
outdoors and in the studio. Third, it has an incredibly simple, yet powerful interface on the back of the unit and you can also use the Elinchrom Studio App to control the strobe from your phone, which comes in handy if you have the strobe mounted up high above your subject. Of course, you can also control most strobe functions using the Elinchrom Transmitter Pro on your camera. Lastly, it has an adjustable LED modeling lamp with color temperatures from 2700K to 6500K and an output of 4000 Lumens. All in all, I would say Elinchrom packed a lot of solid features into the FIVE.

Now, I know Profoto, Godox and other brands have had a very similar style of monobloc strobe design for quite some time. Many would say Elinchrom is late to the party and the FIVE isn't that much different to these other

options. And honestly, they may be right. But, I would counter with the fact that Elinchrom has done it better than any of the other brands. The FIVE has an old school circular flash tube that fills up light modifiers as they are designed to work—unlike some other brands that have a flat front port. The HSS is also optimized to a level none of other competitor's strobes can match. Toss in the fact that Elinchrom makes some of the best softboxes and light modifiers in the game and it is a kick ass system. Some of us might need more light output (i.e. Power as in Watt/seconds) and that is why I still have my ELB 1200s and use them often. For most folks, 500 Ws is going to be plenty of power and the FIVE might just be the best battery-powered 500 Ws strobe on the market. My thanks to MAC Group and Elinchrom for letting me test out these new strobes. Go to [Elinchrom.com](https://www.elinchrom.com) for more info.

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*on assignment:*







**D**uring the Pandemic, like many of my peers, I found myself at a loss in terms of creativity and drive to go out and create new images. I was in need of a personal project but I struggled to find one that really got me excited. It took some intense introspection to figure out what drives my photography and my curiosity. What came to the surface was my love of science and specifically, my obsession with NASA and space travel as a child. I had known about the Artemis program for five years previous to this project, having spoken to the NASA Johnson Space Center photography group in Houston, Texas and also having been a judge for the internal NASA photography competition since that presentation in 2016. While in Houston, I was given a grand tour behind the scenes, which only furthered my longing to photograph the NASA Artemis program.

At the end of 2021, I started sending out emails and calling my contacts to see what was possible in terms of photographing any aspect of the Artemis project. I also reached out to my clients to see if I could get an editorial assignment as that helps greatly in getting access to behind the scenes preparation. What I found was that the project had been in process for so long that most doors were closed because others were already documenting the progress and working with my existing clients. In early 2022, I was denied a press pass and thought that might be the end of it. But a few weeks later I was offered another option with the NASA Social program that brings in social media influencers to document the launch. It didn't seem like a great fit for what I was trying to do, but it was the only option.

As someone who has not photographed many rocket launches, I was an outsider for sure trying to dive into a

new genre. Adventure sports and moon launches don't have a lot of overlap. But in my mind, NASA is the home of the biggest adventures that humans have ever attempted. Hence, this personal project is an extension of the adventure sports world, just on a much, much larger scale.

As this was a personal project, it started out as something I was paying for out of pocket—like any other personal photo project. On the first trip out to NASA Kennedy Space Center, located about an hour due east of Orlando, Florida on Cape Canaveral, I spent three days with the NASA Social crew touring various parts of the space center, photographing the rocket on the launch pad, the Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB), and hearing from several astronauts as well as having a Q&A session with NASA Head Administrator Bill Nelson. They gave us a lot of access in a very short time and while I was itching for more access, this was just a first step.

While awaiting the launch, I saw that a cinematographer I had worked with quite a bit while working with the Red Bull Air Force was also there for the launch. I reached out to say hello and he told me he was capturing footage for Amazon Alexa since Alexa was in the space capsule tracking data for NASA. He asked if I would be up for shooting stills for them and I opted into a mini-assignment to get them some still images. Hence, the personal project was growing some legs, which helped to pay for some of the travel expenses.

Sadly, on that first trip out in August 2022, there were some Hydrogen leaks that prevented Artemis from launching. We were positioned on a platform just next to the VAB near the Turning Station inlet—and in front of

the main press site— for this first attempt. The light that morning was perfect for the launch. We had been out there all night and literally pulled an all-niter to be in position for the launch and avoid the traffic with thousands of people streaming into the surrounding areas for the launch. Hence, it was sad to see that the rocket didn't go, but that is just part of the game.

Three days later was the next attempt. It seemed ridiculous to fly all the way back to New Mexico only to come back three days later so I just extended my trip and waited for the next launch. I had with me a water housing for my FUJIFILM GFX100S and a brand new prototype lens from Fujifilm as well so it gave me time to go out and test out those new items and do some work for Fujifilm. Amazingly, I also knew quite a few photographers in the Orlando area so I spent some time getting together with them and having a few ocean adventures as well. Yet again, when it came time for the second launch attempt it was scrubbed due to further hydrogen leaks.

In the following months, there were a few more stops and starts and a massive hurricane that came through, which forced NASA to move the Artemis rocket back into the VAB for safety. Because of this the launch was postponed three more times as NASA dealt with these and other issues. Between August and November I watched just about every Artemis related news conference and stayed primed and ready to go back out for another attempt all the while hoping that I didn't have another assignment right when the next launch window opened.

Luckily, when the November launch window opened Artemis was scheduled for a time that fell just between two assignments and I could make it back out. The launch

was slated for November 16th in the middle of the night between 12:30 and 3:30 AM. I have to say I was not elated with the news of a night launch. It was already a high-contrast scene during daylight but a night launch created a much tougher scenario.

For this launch, I flew in the night before and flew home just a few hours after the launch. As it was a night launch it was another all-niter to get into our position in front of the press site and wait for the launch window. While we waited, no one slept. There was a good feeling and a lot of energy. We also had two astronauts come out and speak with us, which were fascinating conversations.

At around 11 PM or so I also met some other photographers through Jared Polin (of FroKnowsPhoto—a well known photography YouTube channel) and a discussion of exposure settings was brewing among several photographers who have photographed hundreds of night launches. This one conversation saved the day for me as otherwise I would have completely blown the exposure settings. They told Jared and I that the standard settings were 1/2,500th second, f/8 at ISO 100. When I heard those numbers I was shocked, especially since my camera was set to ISO 6400 at the moment. I asked several times if they were serious about the exposure settings and what their experience was with these settings. They replied that they had used these settings on numerous launches and when the rocket ignites it is like the sun just came out. Luckily I listened to them and changed both my camera settings. I opted for ISO 200 instead of ISO 100 just to give me a little extra headroom on the exposure but those settings were right on the money.

As we passed midnight, the rocket fueling process had



gone smoothly. The rocket was fully fueled at this point. But there was another small hydrogen leak. NASA sent in the RED crew, something that had never been done before, who were tasked with tightening down a few bolts at the base of the fully fueled rocket. Of course, as you can imagine, Artemis is essentially a 325-foot tall bomb at this stage of the launch sequence. Going in just below it was serious business. Any spark or even a bit of static electricity could ignite a massive explosion so they had to be extremely careful. With careful expertise the RED crew solved the problem and the launch countdown continued on.

Shortly thereafter, a radar Ethernet cable went bad at the Space Force Center nearby where they tracked all of the areas air traffic. Such a simple thing seemed ridiculous to scrub a launch but this was a critical part of the Cape Canaveral infrastructure. As far as I know it took an hour to get a new cable, which I am guessing is not something you can just stop in at the local Best Buy electronic store to pick up. This pushed the launch back to somewhere around 1:30 AM at the earliest. But they got the cable and once again the launch was back on. All the time, things were going so smoothly, much better than any prior attempt. We were all in high spirits. I for one was hoping it would go off this time because were it to be scrubbed I would not be able to make it back due to back-to-back assignments starting a few days later.

By the time we were within ten minutes on the countdown, there was little doubt that the launch was going to happen. So much had been poured into this launch that it seemed surreal that it was imminent. At the two minute warning we turned on a live broadcast on my iPhone so we could stay tuned in for the launch (we were in front of

the countdown clock and could not see it from our position). In terms of gear, I had a Nikon Z9 with a 500mm lens on it and my FUJIFILM GFX100S with a GF250mm lens and 1.4x teleconverter attached to it, creating a 350mm GFX lens. Both cameras were set up to blast away at their fastest frame rates and I had them on tripods right next to each other so I could look through one and depress the shutter release on both cameras simultaneously.

At minus five seconds (five seconds before launch) the Artemis main engines were ignited. I mashed down the shutter release on both cameras and held them down hard. I could see nothing through the electronic viewfinders because my exposure settings were essentially ten stops below what you would use before the engines ignited. Hence, I saw the main engines spark and light but it was just a blast of light in the viewfinder. Almost instantly, the Solid Rocket Boosters (SRBs) ignited and that lit up the entire area just as if the sun had come out. I could see below me the ground was lit like it was high noon. I kept my fingers mashed down on the shutter releases on my cameras. The Z9 has no buffer so it shot at 20 frames per second for 40 seconds or so—until well after the rocket had left my frame. I kept shooting even after the rocket had left my field of view because the boiling water vapor created by the rockets heat exhaust was boiling up as you can see in the images here.

After about 14 seconds the sound of the rocket engines hit us from three miles away. Up until that point it was a wild experience to correlate what your eyes were seeing with the silence—save for the crowd around us going wild with joy. I had ear plugs in so I didn't hear the initial blast of sound claw its way towards us, but I also had a decibel

meter running on my phone which registered 103.5 dB at our position. While a 103 dB isn't that loud, imagine moving just one mile closer and it would be 125 dB or even louder. At the base of the rocket it was over 140 dB, which would be permanent hearing loss instantly.

Once I finished photographing the bubbling clouds of vapor around the launch pad, I pulled my Z9 off the tripod and photographed the rocket ascending in the night sky. This was the plan all along. I just didn't realize how wild the fomenting water vapor would be around the base of the rocket. I also knew before hand that these shots after the initial launch would be bonus shots if anything as the exposure of a white-hot light in the sky didn't really allow for seeing the rocket much at all. As can be seen in the last image in this gallery (see page 43), you can barely see the rocket in the night sky but this is the point at which it lit up the thin veil of clouds around it creating one interesting image.

In the last ten seconds I was so tuned into the photography aspects of triggering two cameras—while looking through the viewfinder of one of them—that I feel like I didn't really experience the launch. I was so focused on getting the images my experience seemed artificial looking through an EVF. Or at least that is what it seemed like at the time. Afterwards, there was the effusive joy of experiencing something so much bigger than yourself or even the people around you. Knowing it took more than ten years of engineering, testing, funding and all of the teamwork between NASA, Space X, the ESA (European Space Agency) as well as Blue Origin (Amazon) to create and build this rocket and then to see it launch was such a huge relief to many and the start of a whole new era in space flight. This was the first part of the project, which

has the goal of reaching Mars.

Once I was packed up and back on the NASA bus, I downloaded images, made a few quick adjustments to the raw images on my laptop and texted them to the Amazon crew as they still wanted to see the images right away. A few hours later, at the airport, as I sat in the American Airlines lounge zipping through my images in Lightroom, I realized the 20 fps sequence shot with the Z9 might make an incredible timelapse. I quickly output the images and put it together and uploaded that to Instagram. My buddy at Amazon saw it and asked for a [full-resolution version of the timelapse](#) (click on the link here to see the timelapse on Vimeo) to put into their short film featuring Alexa.

After my return, I seemed to be in a daze for the next twenty-four hours as if my body was still trying to figure out what I just saw. It felt like I saw an alien spacecraft leave our planet to go home somehow. I found out later that this sensation is normal after seeing a launch, especially one of this magnitude. My hope is that this is just the start of documenting our exploration of deep space. While I will most likely never be an astronaut at this point in my life, I can work with my connections at NASA and with my clients and hopefully document future launches and preparation for future launches, not just from the Artemis program. Time will tell. What follows over the next sixteen pages are a collection of images created over the course of ten days at the Kennedy Space Center. I photographed Artemis on the launch pad from just about every angle—and of course the launch. My sincere thanks to everyone at NASA and [NASA Social](#) in particular for taking such great care of us and allowing us to come out and document the launch.







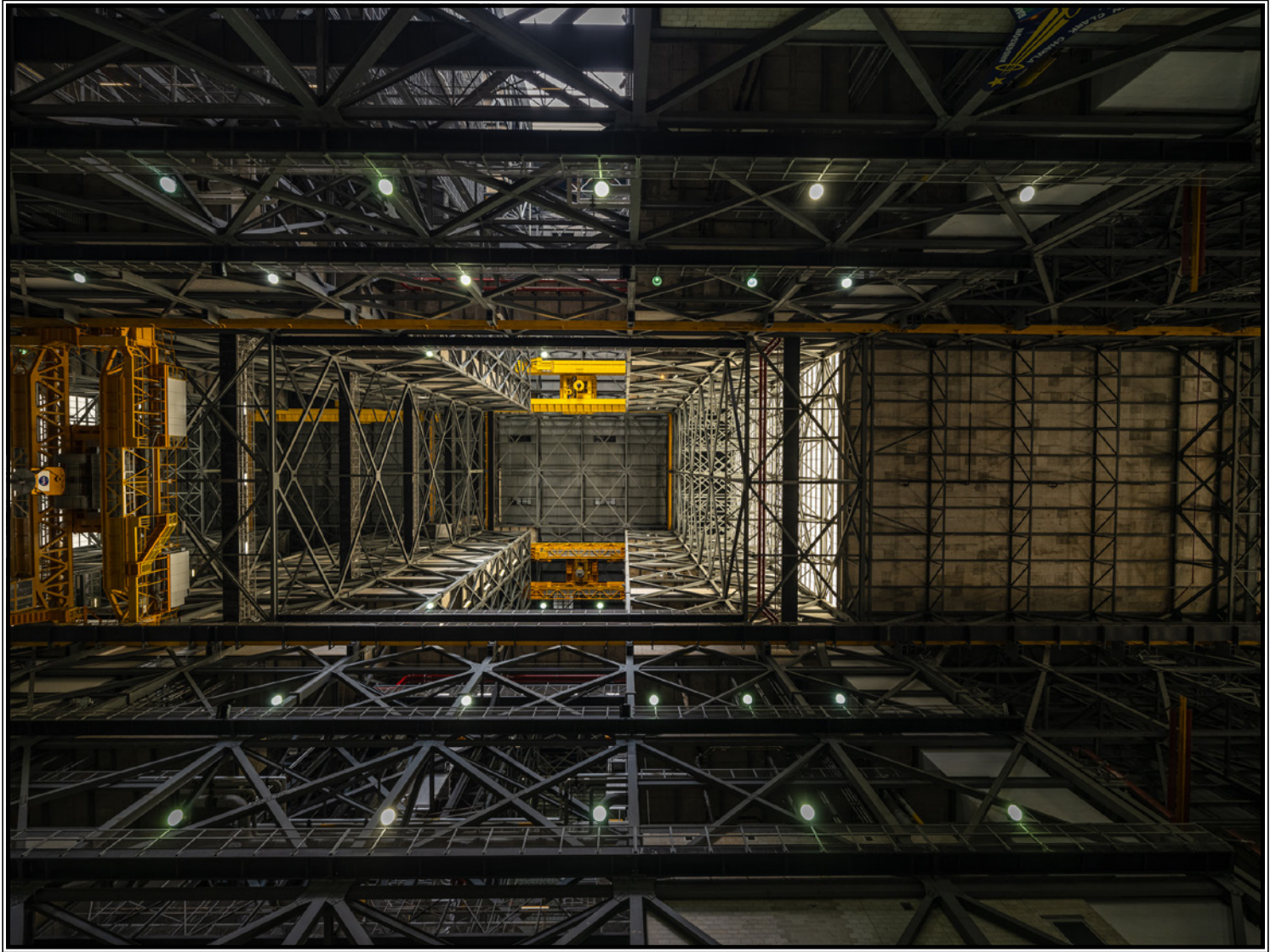










































portfolio









**A**rtificial Intelligence (Ai) has risen to a level where it has become fairly alarming for many creatives—especially photographers and illustrators. At the moment, the leading Ai websites like [DALL-E 2](#) and [MidJourney.com](#) are only generating fairly low resolution images for social media. But, I can certainly see a not too distant future where those sites or others will create much higher resolution images. This will certainly disrupt the advertising world in many ways. For example, what small to mid-size company would pay a photographer or illustrator to create images for them when they can just type in a few words, add photos of their project to the mix and poof—out pops a few wild looking, eye catching images for them to use for local and regional ads. If they don't like the results, try again until something comes out that works. And all of this costs a very low monthly fee compared to hiring a human.

On the flip side, there are still events (Weddings, sporting events, etc.), real-life action and a host of other things that will need to be photographed to show reality. Hence, I don't see real world photography going anywhere. This will hit some photographers harder than others. I don't really know how it will impact the photo industry. No one really does. But I know that change has always been a part of this industry and you either embrace it or give up and move on to something else. From the inimitable Seth

Godin in a [recent blog post](#) about change he said, "The world changes and we have a choice: Fight hard to keep it the way it was or notice what happened and then decide to do something with that insight."

Fstoppers (not a source I reference very often) also recently posted a blog post about Ai and how it might impact the industry, "What's basically happening is that Ai is scraping photos by living, breathing photographers on the internet and putting them in a blender to spit out lookalikes that could potentially land users in legal hot water. And even if it doesn't, the one thing that the Ai won't have is the story to go with capturing the photo." At the moment Getty has already filed two lawsuits against Ai companies. Hence, the "scraping" of copyrighted photos to create new composites is going to get really sticky in the legal sense. Because of this I have a feeling larger corporations might not jump into the Ai world (at least not right away) as much as smaller businesses. Another interesting quote from that same article was from engineer Fran Blanche, who said "AI is plagiarizing our past to generate our future." I have to admit, the imagery that I have seen from DALL-E 2 and other Ai options are compelling. For the outdoor genre I am not too concerned at the moment, but Ai will certainly eat up a little bit more of the advertising pie, leaving less money to hire content creators. As usual, the only certainty is change.



*Charlie Pinder looking out at a frosty world at the top of the Wolf Creek Ski Area near Pagosa Springs, Colorado.*



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