

Howdy howdy, folks, and welcome the Moose podcast number 402

The Power of Subtraction.

How are you folks doing this week? Little quiet on the old email front. I assume that's because, well, Solstice is a couple days away making the use of all those daylight hours. A lot of birds have now fledged. So you you have got the opportunity to go out and get the kids being fed on the branch by the mom. And we've had some really crazy weather. It's actually snowing. It's snowing on the top of our mountain here. So crazy weather. I know a bunch of her out there storm chasing some great images. And I want to I want to thank you for sharing them because I miss the missed those those chases in that drama that comes across the landscape. Hey, speaking of landscape, if you haven't signed up yet already, Kelby one is doing a landscape conference online starts tomorrow, Tuesday. Actually I think it started Thursday with the pre cards. My apologies. I know I am going to be on there live tomorrow talking about the sun always rises. I hope you have a treat to join us and can be some great stuff, great instructors, great really great inspirational stuff coming. So as the Kelby one landscape conference starting today the three cons hey I want to thank my good friends in Bedford Camara Bedford's dot com they are they're really busy right now if you did aren't aware there is a Nikon Z nine trade up \$500 off when you trade up on az9 my favorite camera body and and besides all that good stuff, you know, they feel bad for this guy too. Just a ton. A ton of great stuff, great service. They do workshops, they do classes. I mean, this is all their stores are just chock full of great people just there to help you and your photography move forward. So head there, have some fun, learn some stuff. And when you buy things, just remember to mention the old moose and get that 5% off you check out. It's it's a great place, folks. Bedford's camera. If you haven't noticed, I've been posting a few more of my what we call adventures. Well, I think that people might think of as workshops on the website. The latest one is Delaware Birds, May 2025 going to the lower part of the state. You could think of the south side of the bay. Continuing my hunt for the red knot breeding plumage, lottery and godwit, whim rolls and all the other great shorebirds. We're going to be everything from kissing the sand with beach panting to standing up and getting flight shots. I call them adventures because, well, we don't work need. Sometimes people shop, but that's usually in the vehicle when we talk about gear and all sudden Bedford's website pops up and people are buying things. But we call them adventures because it is an adventure. You don't know. You just don't know until you actually are right there in front of the critter what you're going to have fun photographing so you can find them there on the website moose Petersen dot com. Love to go shooting with you. The power of subtraction. So I don't remember. I want to say was a. It was NPR that got me thinking about this. Yeah, I listen that quite a bit. It's something I like to listen to when I drive. And the gentleman was on there was talking about. Building as in home and use the gentleman as a civil engineer and how the power subtraction really makes a difference. Now I'm not we're not going to the less is more. That's not what we're talking about at all. It's not even it's even the words. It's not related. So the power of subtraction. How can we take this? Very. It really is a very powerful idea and apply it to our photography and to make our photography better. First example I want to give you is because you know everything, right? Everything. Really relaxed too, and released other things in some way. So in this case, for example, the power of subtraction. Think of Picasso, a minimalist. And let me tell you, I've been practicing that word minimalist for a week, just so I could say without tripping on it, you know? He became, as, you know, Picasso, not because he cut off his ear and that kind of stuff, but because what? His painting style. He actually used the power of subtraction to be a minimalist to reach people. If you

think about it's actually it's really kind of a powerful idea in removing or not including to start with elements or ideas to make. It's simpler to understand what you're trying to communicate. So to me, it's like, boom. There's there's a there's a first obvious, you know, how the power of subtraction can be so successful in a visual arts world. Put it another way if you think about it when you're writing, you go back and edit and you edit for a couple of reasons. One, especially for me is to get all those grammatical errors, but to more importantly, to cut words out. So you're using less word and each word is, you know, cowering for ten. And really good editors are really good at truncating. A body of text for a couple of reasons. One, if it looks smaller, more people were engaged to read it. And, you know, that's that's a sad fact. Right. Less time, more people will say, okay, I'll read this. A big type, you know. You know, love and war and all that. But Tolstoy here, right. How many people read that, sucker? So you edit for making it visually inviting. But also see you tap into imagination using words that. If each word counts for ten, then you're you're you're pulling out people's imagination. And when you start striking out imagination. Hey, you get the brass ring because now sky's the limit. Now putting this into the practical terms as photographers. I mean, think of the first thing that comes to mind that has to do with and not really hard to come by, but landscape photography and I'm going to talk about this in great depth in my class on Tuesday, but when I started out, yeah, I know, that was a long time ago. Dinosaurs had just barely disappeared. Hyperfocus distance and tons of focus. With focus going throughout the entire photograph. I mean, was it having less depth of focus was almost sacrilege. That was like instant, you know, and second class f you know, it's like we try to save money, you know? And it could have been my natural rebellion side. But I'm like, if everybody's going with everything in focus, I'm going to go with the opposite. And I did that with my landscapes. Rarely do I close my lens down, past the maximum aperture of 2.8, which is, you know, 14, 24, 24 to 70. You know, those crazy lenses I shoot my landscapes wide open, 2.8, even 7200 to eat, shoot a 2.8 when I'm doing landscape work now that less depth of focus. Okay, think about the power of subtraction. When we have less in focus and we tell the mind where we wanted to start is visual path through a photograph and leading it around through other things. Everything from light, things that are out of focus color. You know, our brains are wired universally around the globe and light and bright is the first thing the mind goes to. Second is sharpness. And how do you see something as being sharp with something around it, not being in sharp? I mean, that's kind of the the very nature depth of focus. And there are ways in which you can trick the mind into thinking things are sharp without really being sharp. And that's a very valid way of manipulating. And that's what we're doing right? When we're telling stories, we really want to take that that reader, that viewer, that the listener down a certain path so we can tell the story a lot of times the way we want to tell a story to the conclusion which we hope will put a smile or whatever emotion we're trying to evoke out of that viewer at the end. So less depth of focus. I see folks still trying to get and thinking that everything sharp. In and of itself is an avenue of making a photograph really good or great. But I am going to suggest that the power subtraction argues differently. What else? You know, I'm going here. And that is under exposure. Right? Under exposure. Less is more. Not so much. But the power subtraction definitely applies to under exposure. And first of all, remember that I always think of exposure equals emotion. Were bright. Normal exposure, overexposure can be happy, you know, just in the quality of the light that's being communicated through exposure. Exposure being of course combination of ISO, shutter speed, f stop and most importantly, the light itself. Right? But if you go to normal exposure or

other exposure, you can change that mood to dark and and moody and spooky and and dramatic all with just exposure. And when you underexposed, you're using the power of subtraction. How? Well, there's there's a lot of you know, just a lot of blacks in our world. Shadows are the most common. And when you're underexposed, you're going to force a lot of those shadows to go belly black. And what happens with black? Well, the first great thing is it puts an edge on things, elements, objects, so they look sharper to the mind, says, okay, this is black, goes out, registers the other color. So more colors become really more predominant. But the biggest thing about that black is it brings out mystery and mystery in a photograph, just like in a written word, taps the imagination. And when you tap the imagination, like I mentioned, you grab the brass ring, people go home and they stop and they look. And it's just getting people to stop. And look, if you haven't noticed, is a challenge. I'm always amazed. I watch folks going through an airport and I understand people have a mission, right? They're either on their way to get on a plane or on their way to get their luggage. But even in an airport, there are lots of visuals that if you take just two or three extra minutes so you won't miss your flight and you won't miss your luggage going around the carousel. There's all these visuals there. If you look at them, you'd be surprised how knowing you have little time, the person that put that stuff up there. They're really good graphic artists. There is very little in what they've got on that wall. There's just a key visual key idea and they're out of there. That's the power of subtraction, working literally in the advertising world to get your attention. And I'm here to tell you, if the people who've been trained to get our attention use these tools, it behooves us you know, putz around with our cameras to perhaps at the very least, consider the power of subtraction. Let me give you a really out there kind of idea when it comes to the power of subtraction, which is a major thing that I see, aviation photographers. Either not knowing, not recognizing, or not acting upon it. It has to do with just one thing, and that's a shiny plane. And I might talk about because it's been wax and because it's got no paint on it at all, it's just silver or aluminum. It's that bright just in those eyes. Love those planes, right? Those Polish planes are gorgeous, but they are, course. What giant mirrors and what's the top half of the fuselage in the top part of the wing surface going to see. The sky and that sky is blue, right? So if you want your shiny silver aircraft to be shiny and silver. It can't be blue. It can't be reflecting. That blue sky. So when you subtract a blue from that aircraft, you get silver. I mean, that's the power of subtraction is it can be that big and dramatic. You can also take a bluish tint plain, and you can now make it silver. How about another. This is a this is one that. Well, unless you shoot with me and you go to one of our d d sessions d d standing for digital darkroom, we would do those on our adventures. We get together our computers and and we look at our images. And if they don't have that kind of, you know, one on one for me, you wouldn't have ever heard this technique. So I don't really put it out there because it's really very specific to certain times in images, but. We have a photograph and we're just going to just sorbet can kind of get a hold most people will get an idea if you have a mountain and the mountain has a snow cap so the whole mountains are white. Just the top has a cap of white snow. And if you knowing that light and bright, the mind goes there and behind that mountain right there, there are clouds in this process. How do you make that snow? The first thing the person sees in the photograph, because we're assuming in the scenario that the snow in the top of the mountain is the subject, the mountain itself, the subject. We want the viewer to see it, no matter how big or small it is in the frame. How do you do that? Well, most would go and do something

imposed to make the white whiter because snow is white. And that's logical. But thinking of the power of subtraction I've instilled in my students and when they go out with me, they want something brighter, make something around it darker. Power subtraction. Now, why would you want to do that? Well, if you if you think about our pixels, you make something brighter or wider. There's the real possibility it happens quite often, that all sudden you're going to lose the information you'll get. You know that if it's 244, you'll get paper white, you'll have no information in for snow there. Definitely at times when no information is perfectly valid. But let's say you want that information. And if you start messing with those highlights because that's what you're talking about here, then you're going to have no information. And that could be a problem. But when you make things darker around something that you want brighter, you're not messing with those highlights. You're actually protecting them. And it's really simple to make things darker. Everything will go darker. But that highlight, it will still be as you see it. And now, with everything around that thing that's bright, darker. The viewer knows that's where you want them to look. And that's just the power of subtraction. We could go further. We could go to. I didn't want to do a whole episode on a podcast, but I thought about it. Camera bags, you know those kids? I see people with so much gear and they don't need it. Right. I go, guys, you know, you're five. You got \$5,000 there. Think of where you could travel and what you could see if you didn't have that. So am I going to go there? Right. I mean, and you can if you're a photographer, you can think of the powers of attraction. When we start talking about that part of it, okay. It's just a concept that if you just kind of put it in the back of your mind because it doesn't apply every time, everywhere everything. Nothing in photography does that. It's just another one of those little things you can put in your quiver that you would look and go, Oh, maybe if I went a little tighter in my composition here in the viewfinder and I kind of remove a couple of things that power subtraction. Now the subject smacks you between the eyes. Just that exercise alone, if you think about that every so often. I know this podcast was a value. You folks have a marvelous week. Get out there. Share those photographs. And remember to make every click. Your story.