WORKING WITH LIGHT & DARK

Working the Still Life Inside

CREATIVE STILL LIFE

- Lightbox/Light Tent
- Black Backgrounds
- Light Painting
- Natural Light
- Lensbaby
- Textures

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Balancing Act

TECHNICALLY CORRECT

CREATIVE VISION

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CREATING STORIES

- What it “is” vs. What it is “about”
- Storytelling – What is the story?
- Collecting & Arranging Objects
- Creating from Memories

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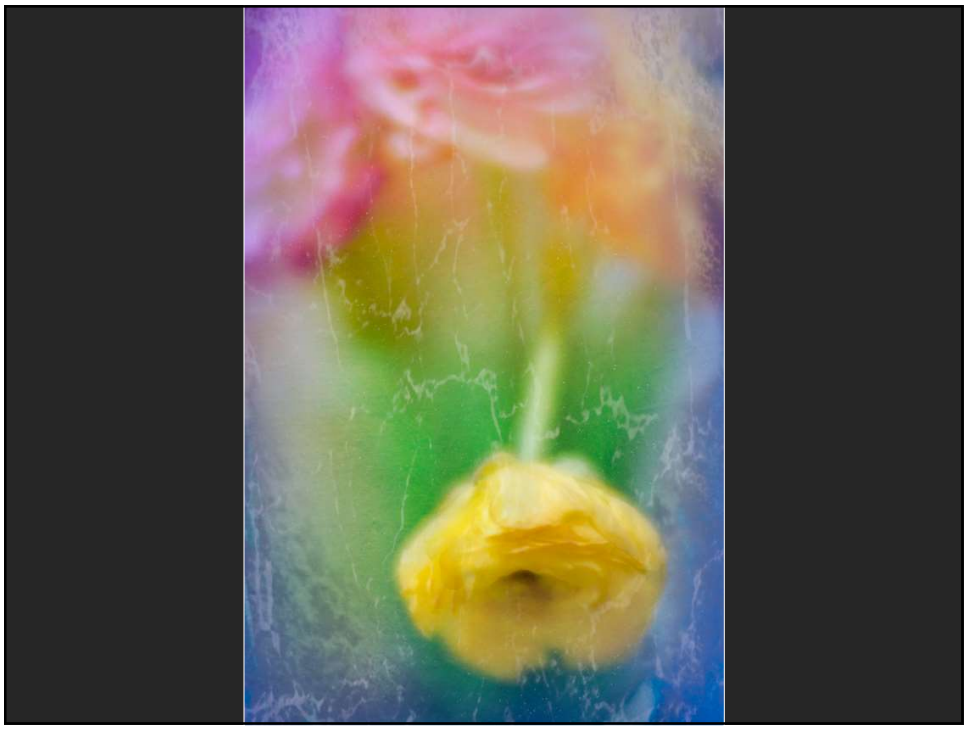

Lighting Options

- Natural/Ambient Light (outside, window light)
- Reflectors/Diffusers
- Flashlights
- LED Lights (large & small)
- Flash (off-camera, remote)
- White Foam Core
- Black Foam Core

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Lightboxes and Light Tents

Practical Tips for Light Tents

- Light Tent has translucent sides to diffuse light coming from multiple sources
  - *Allows for nearly shadowless lighting against a simple background*
  - *Typically, light is positioned on each side with backdrop positioned at back*
  - *Use a tripod*
  - *Place subject inside tent and start with it in the center*
  - *Experiment with lighting*
  - *Use low ISO (100 or 200) and choose aperture based on depth of field you want*

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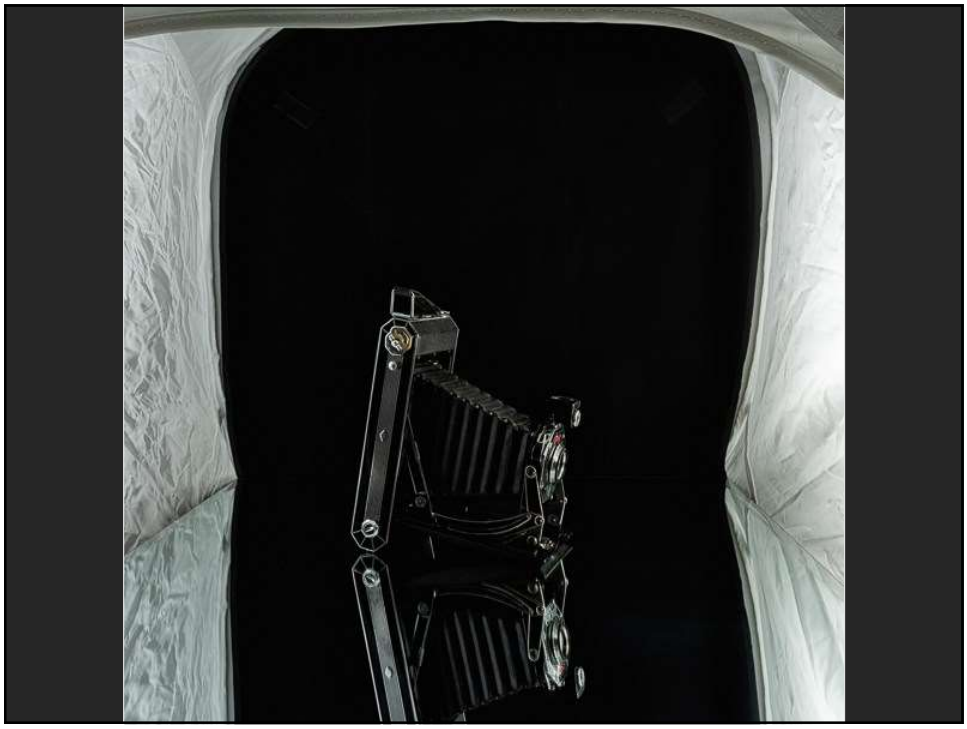

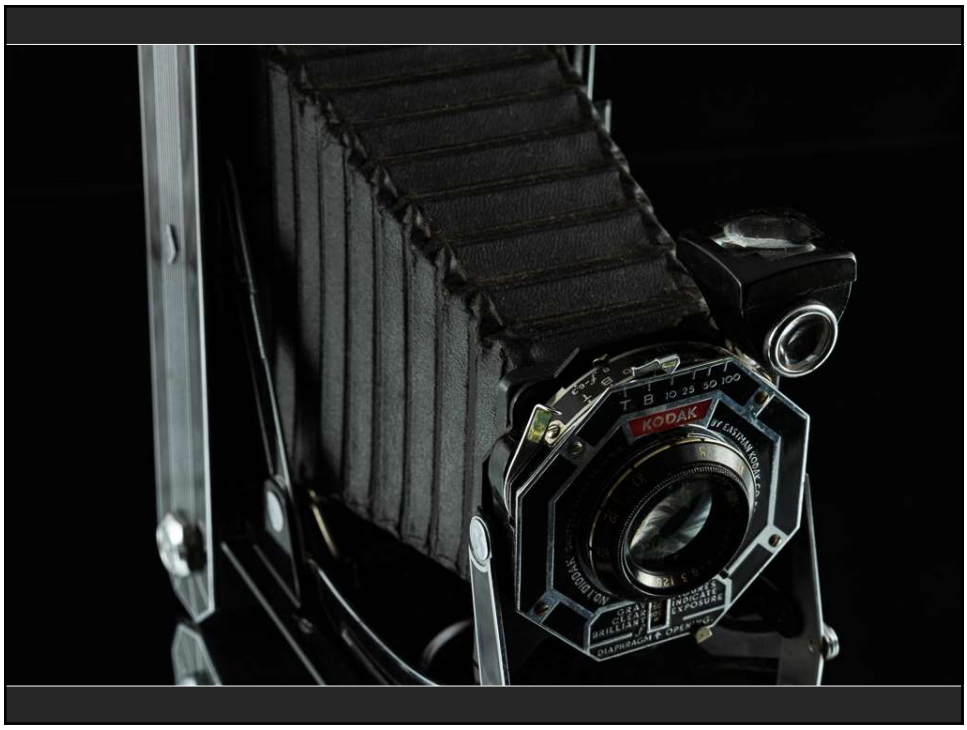

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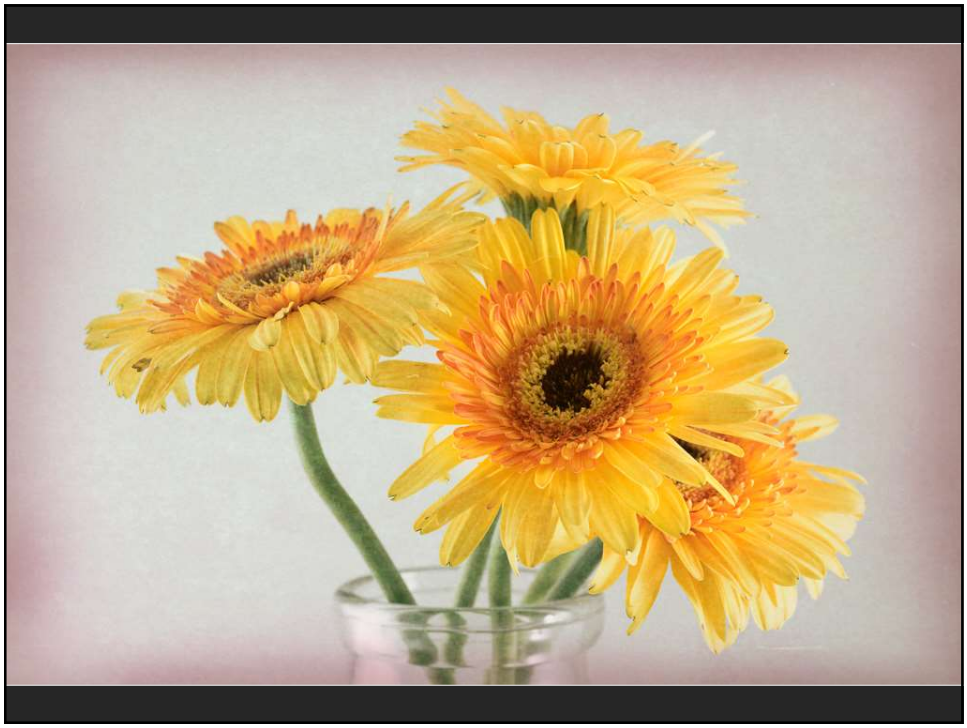

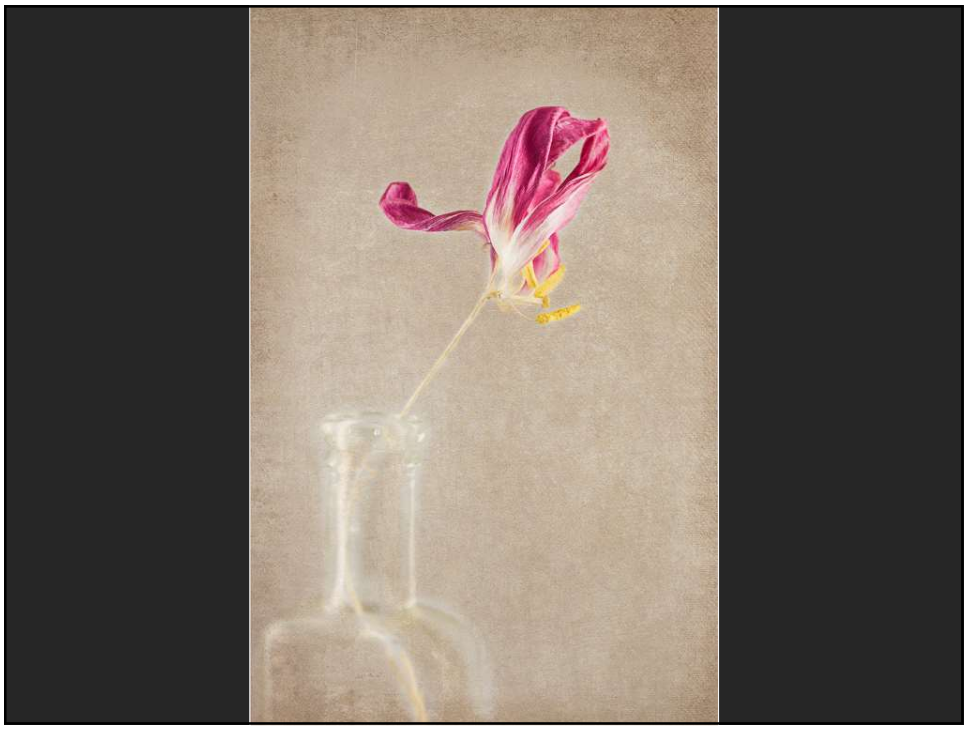

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Practical Tips for Lightboxes & Light Tents

- *Consider shooting bracketed exposures (white backgrounds better at +1 EV or more, black backgrounds at -1 EV or more*
- *Clipping your blacks or whites on the histogram can create a "homogenous" look and focus all attention on your subject*
- *High Key images on lightboxes – OVER expose by at least 2 - 4 stops, sometimes more.*

Practical Tips for Lightboxes

- Lightboxes are rectangular and project light out behind your subject (Remember viewing slides??)
  - Similar techniques as with light tents
  - Images are intended to be "high key"
  - Can take single images leaning toward over-exposure
  - Can take bracketed exposure series and work series with layer stack and masking in Photoshop
  - Can shoot for focus-stacking at single exposure value and blend in Photoshop
  - Lightbox images with clean backgrounds make ideal candidates to add textures to "dress up" the images

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Practical Tips for Light Tents & Lightboxes

With both light tents and light boxes, it is helpful to learn more about setting up still life scenes

- Composition matters
- Lighting & exposure matters
- Keep it simple (most of the time)
- Be prepared to "clean up" your images as spots from dust, flowers, etc., are inevitable
- If you're shooting flowers, be willing to sacrifice them for your vision (cutting, pulling petals, etc.)

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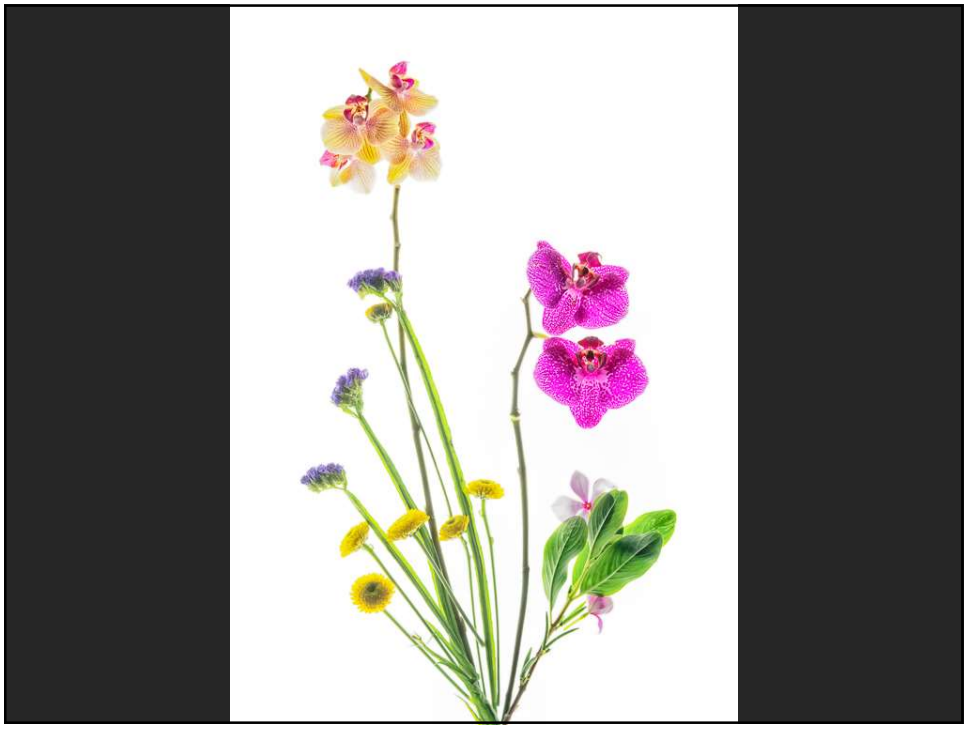

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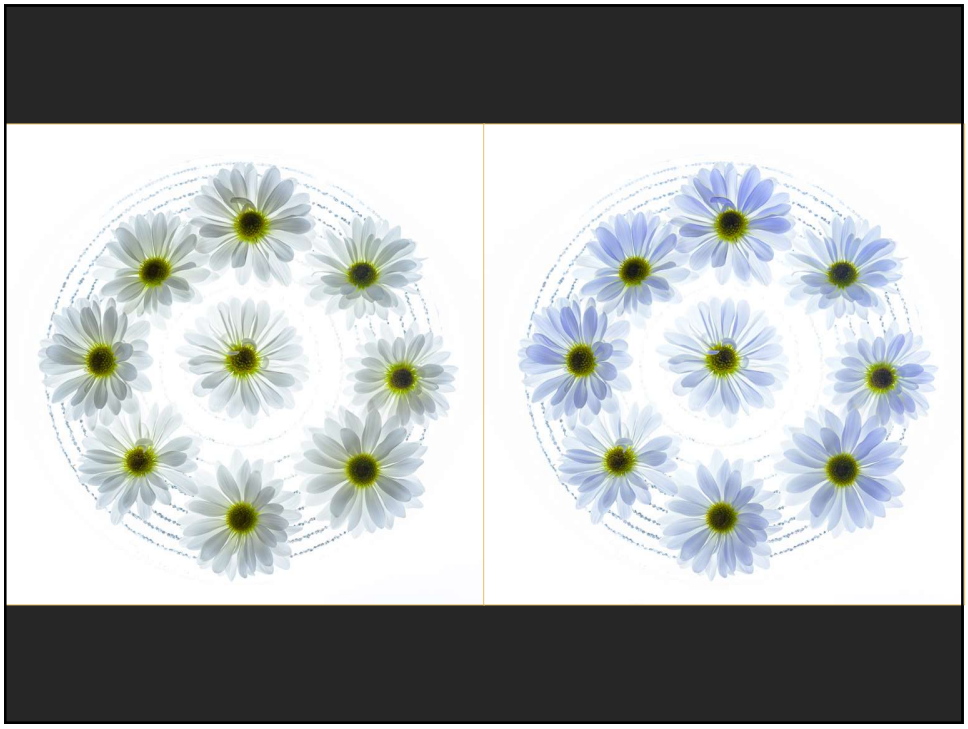

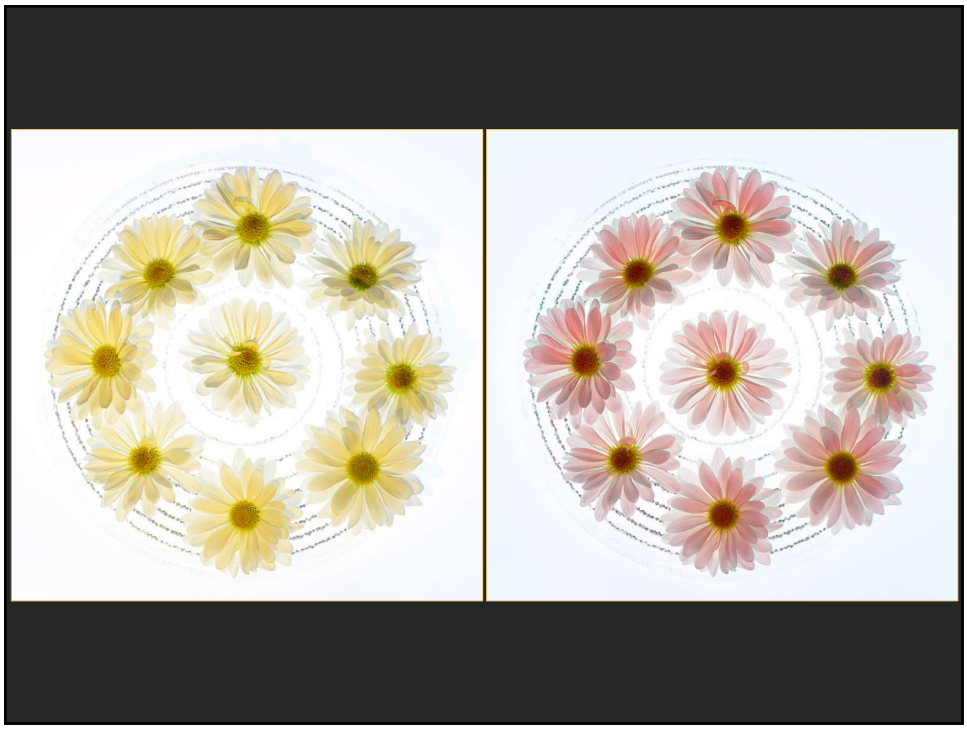

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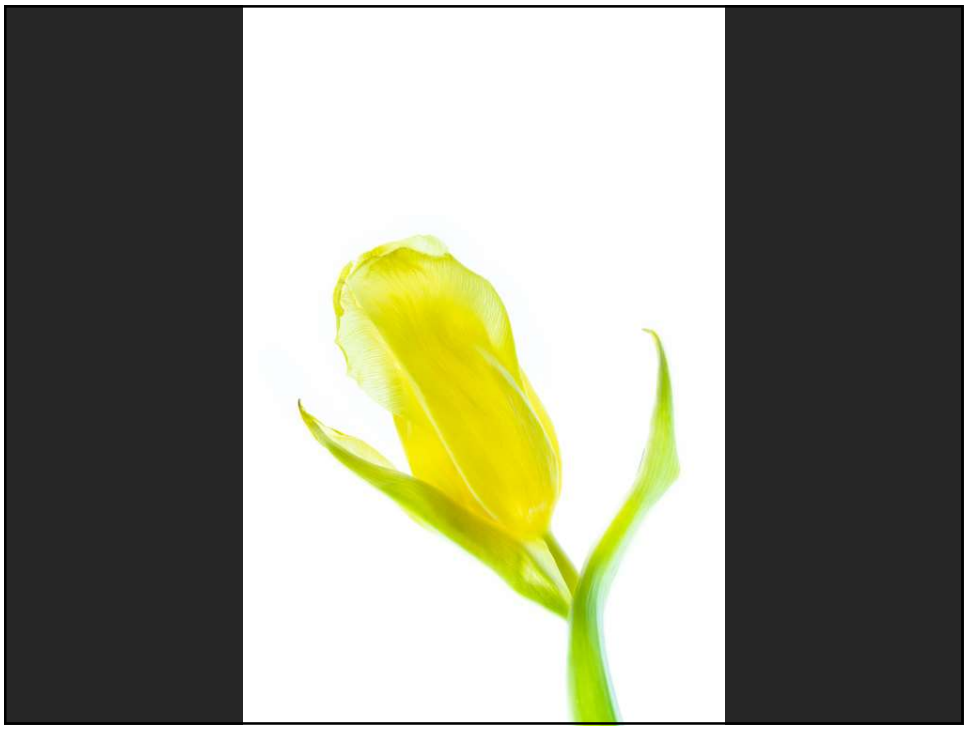

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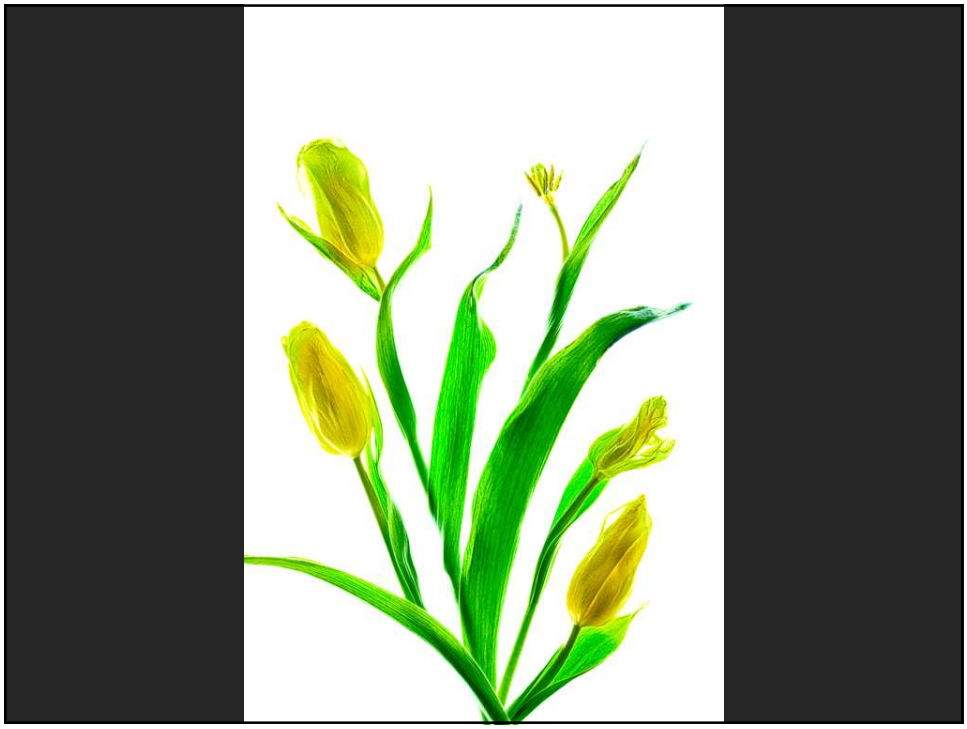

Bracketed Series on Lightbox

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Black Backgrounds

Black Backgrounds

- Wonderful for still life subjects
- Muted natural light works well
- BLACK VELVET is the best fabric as it absorbs almost all light and has little to no sheen.
- Exposures lean toward UNDER-Exposure (-1 or -2, sometimes more)
- Use your tripod and shutter release
- Aim for simplicity
- Low ISO, Aperture to fit subject (f/11 is a good start for more DOF)

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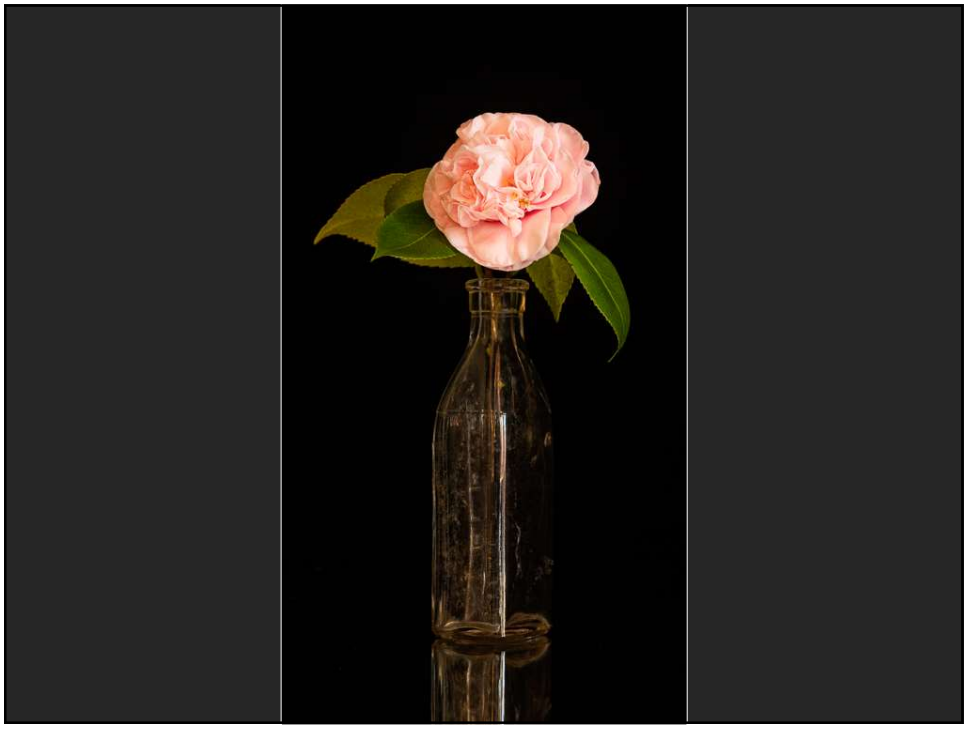

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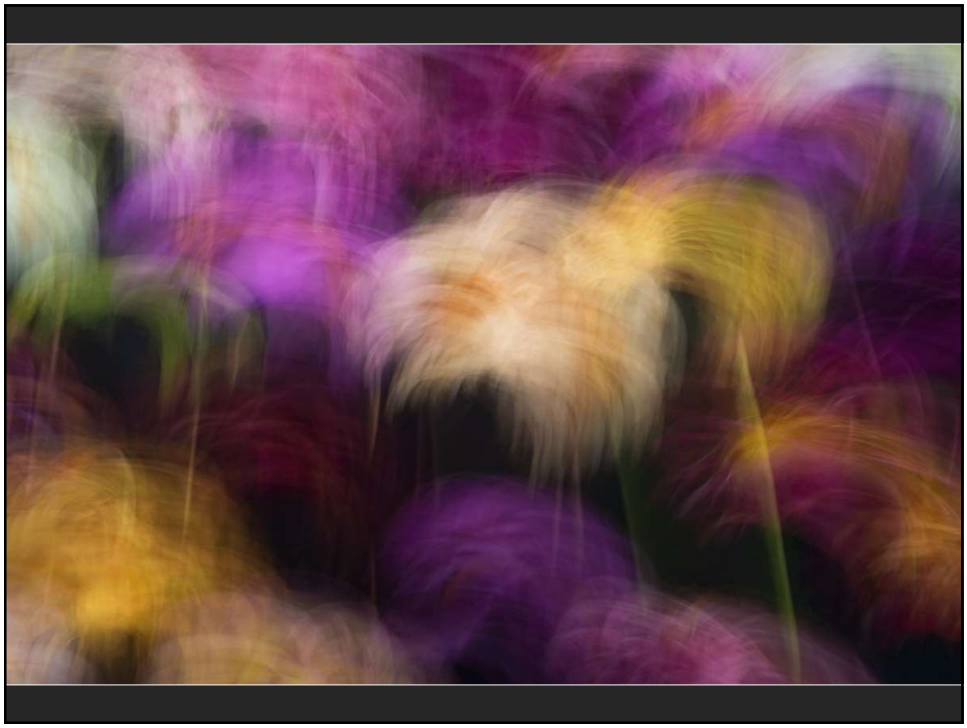

Black Backgrounds

- Using Flash to Create Black/Dark Backgrounds
  - Underexpose image by at least five stops (without flash)
    - You want a black image
  - Need enough distance between subject and background
  - Place focus point on your subject where most important
  - Add your flash to the mix in TTL mode
  - Take the picture and make adjustments from there
  - Your flash is your main light and is meant to overpower the ambient light
  - You can use “snoots” to create spotlights of light on subject

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Light Painting

- Wonderful for still life subjects
- Working in the dark (try to avoid ambient light
- Use your tripod and shutter release
- Compose scene and lock focus
- Light Sources: Flashlight, LED, Pen Light, Flash & diffusers when needed
  - *Keep light moving as you paint*
- Slower shutter speed – 5 seconds or more
- Low ISO, Aperture to fit subject
- Backgrounds can vary

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Natural Light

- Indoors – Window Light
- Other Light Sources: Flashlight, LED, Pen Light, Flash & diffusers when needed
- Camera on Tripod
- Still Life & Macro/Close-Up Opportunities

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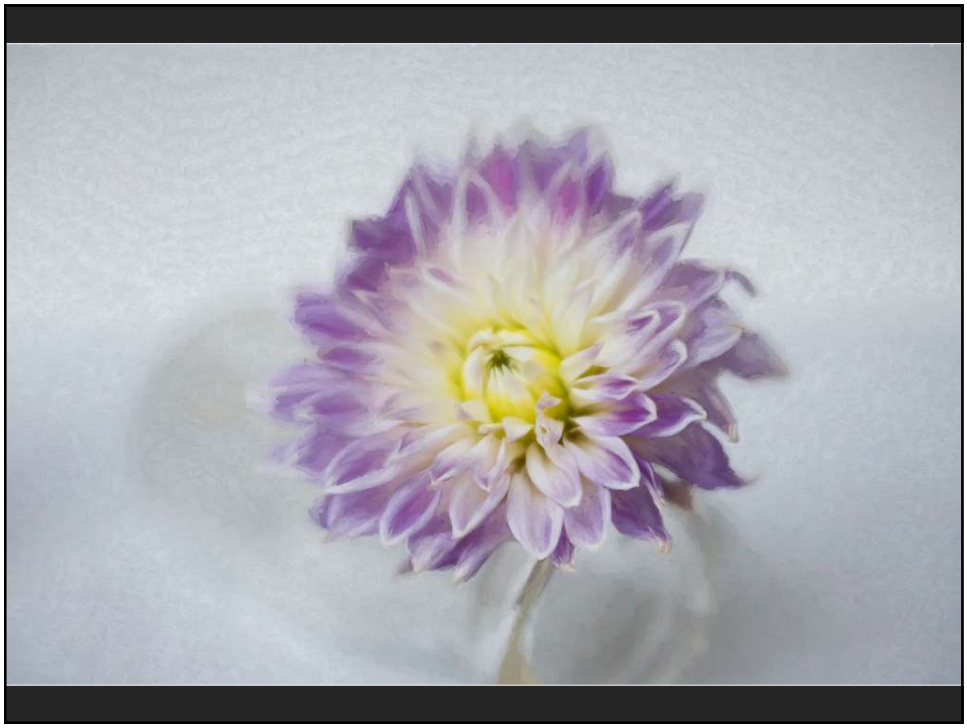

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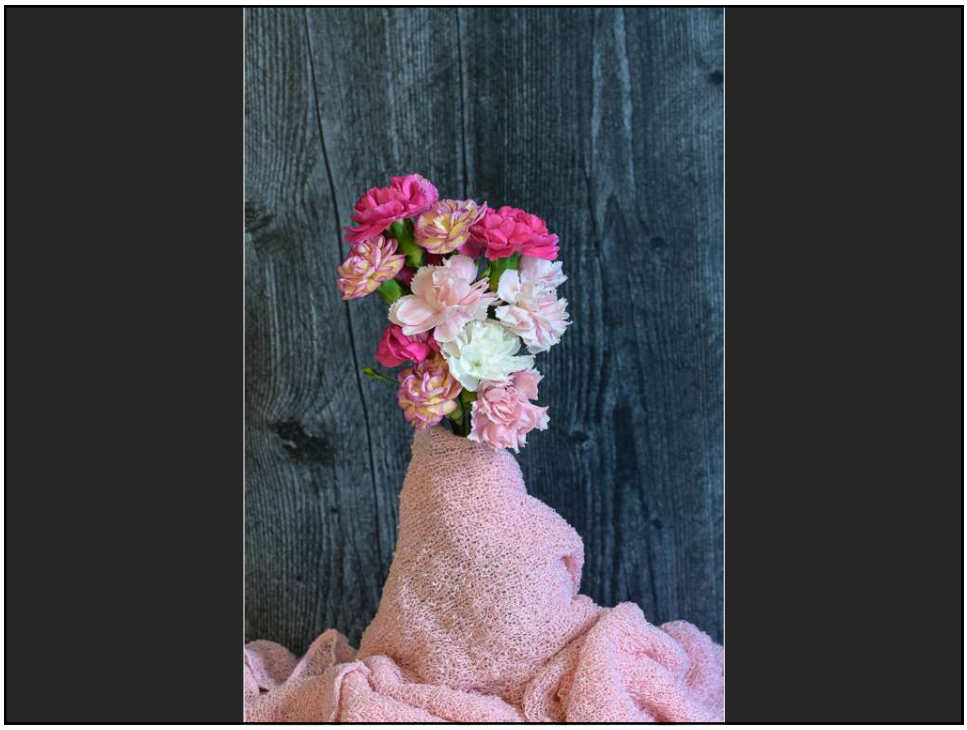

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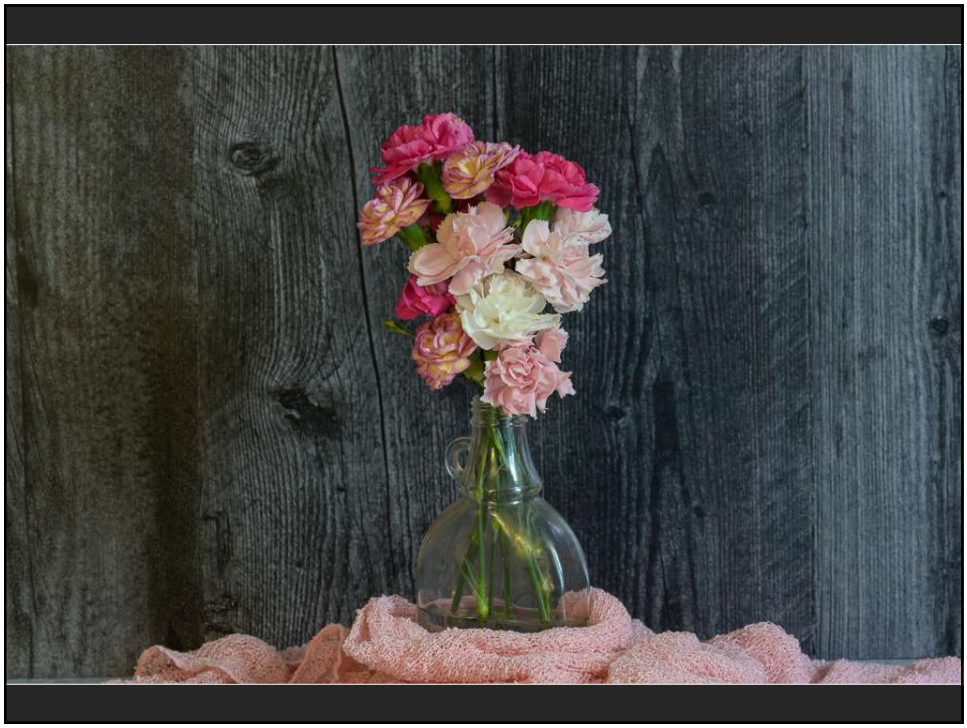

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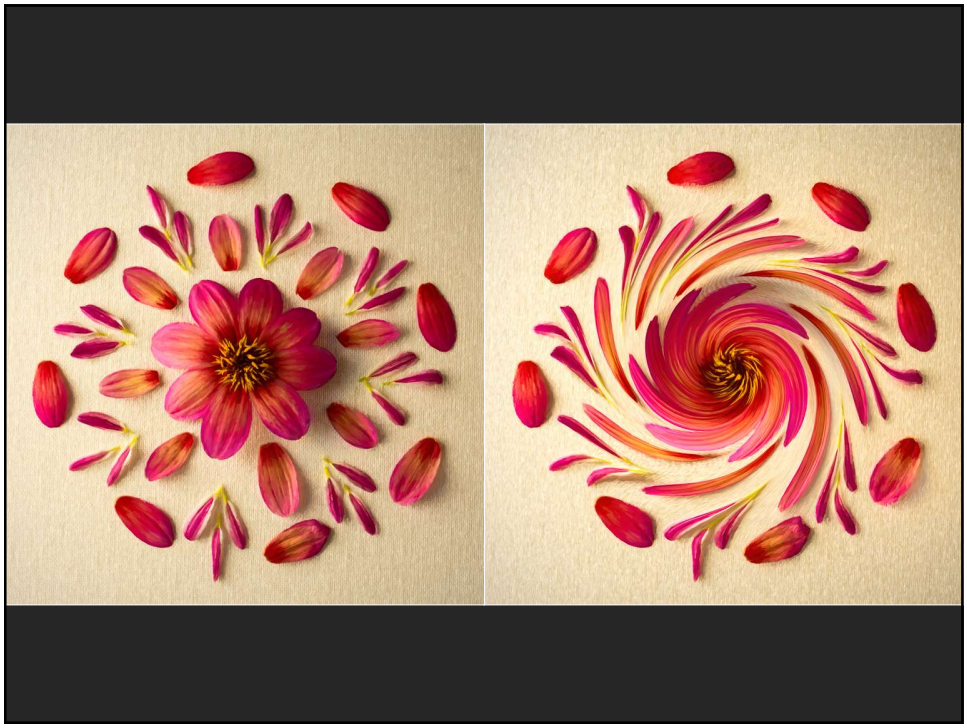

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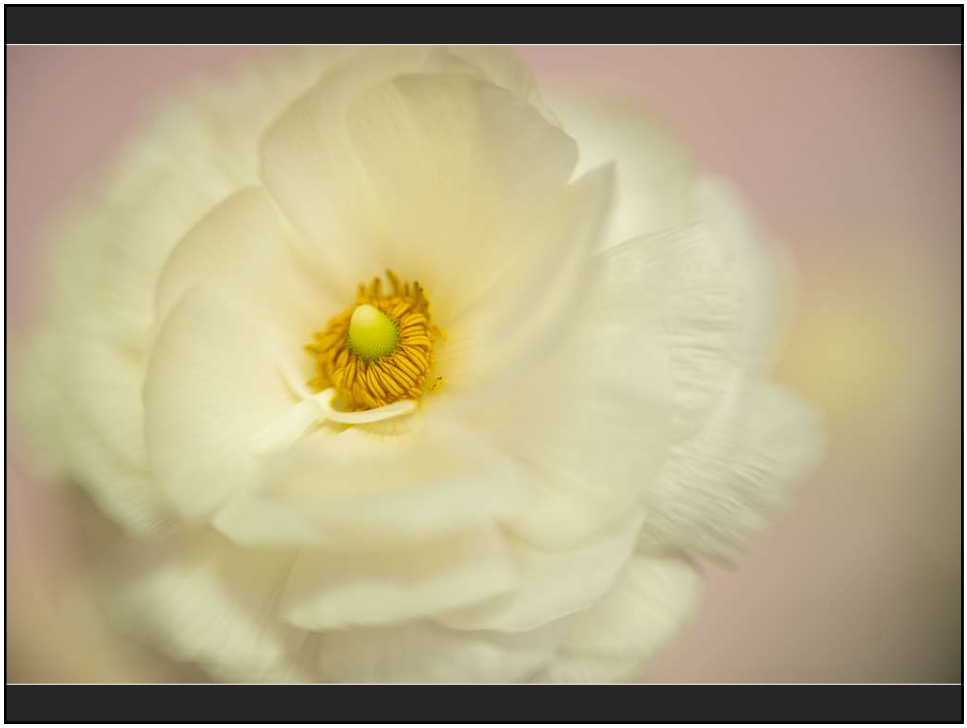

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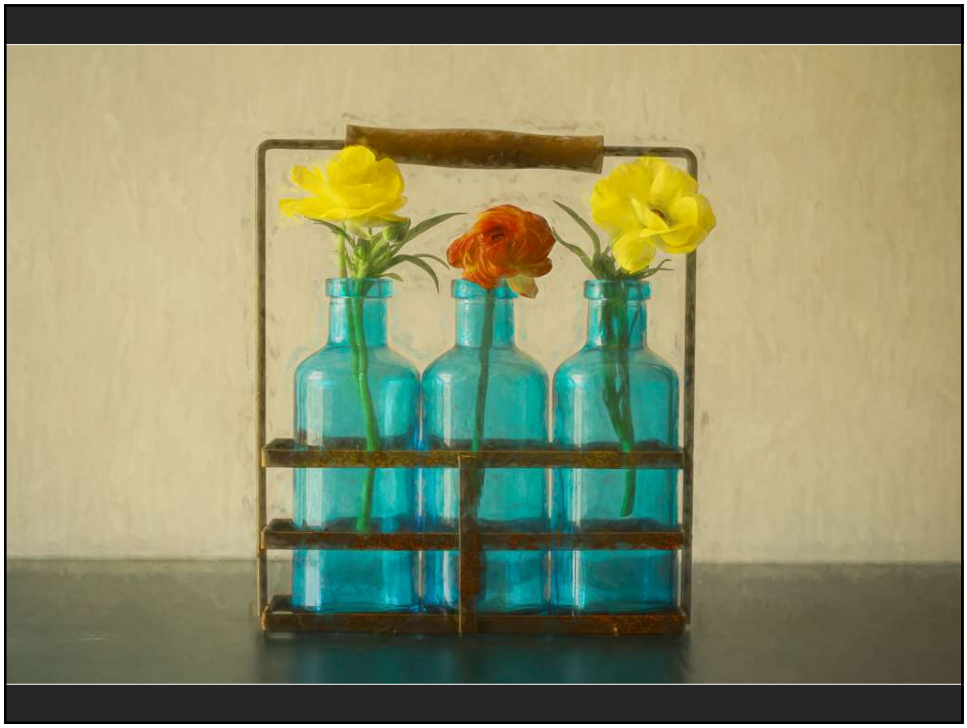

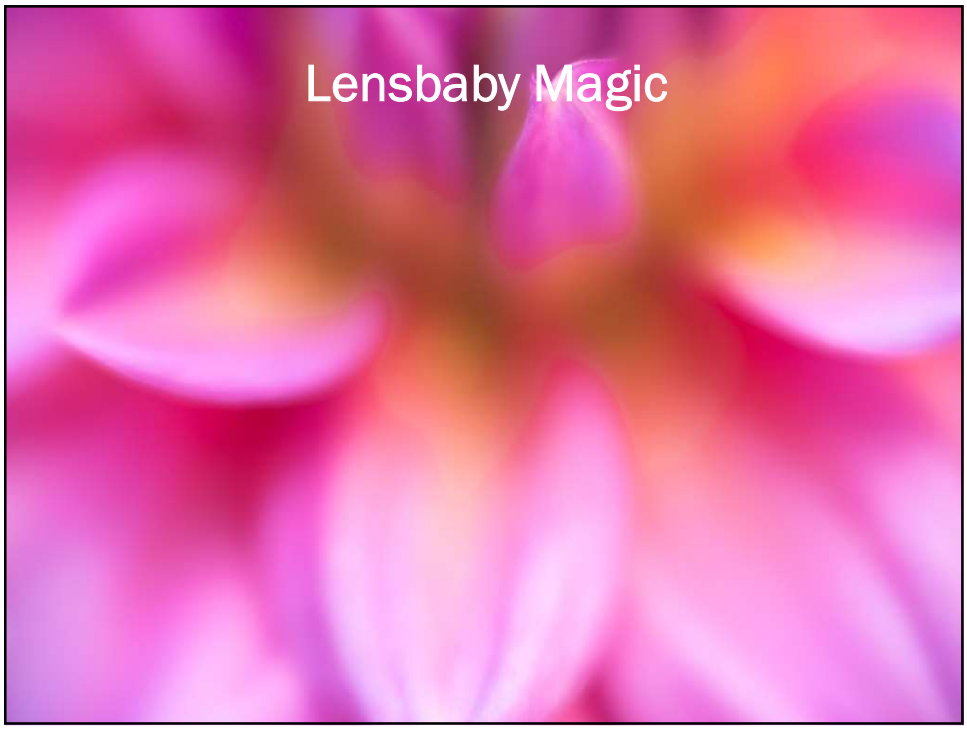

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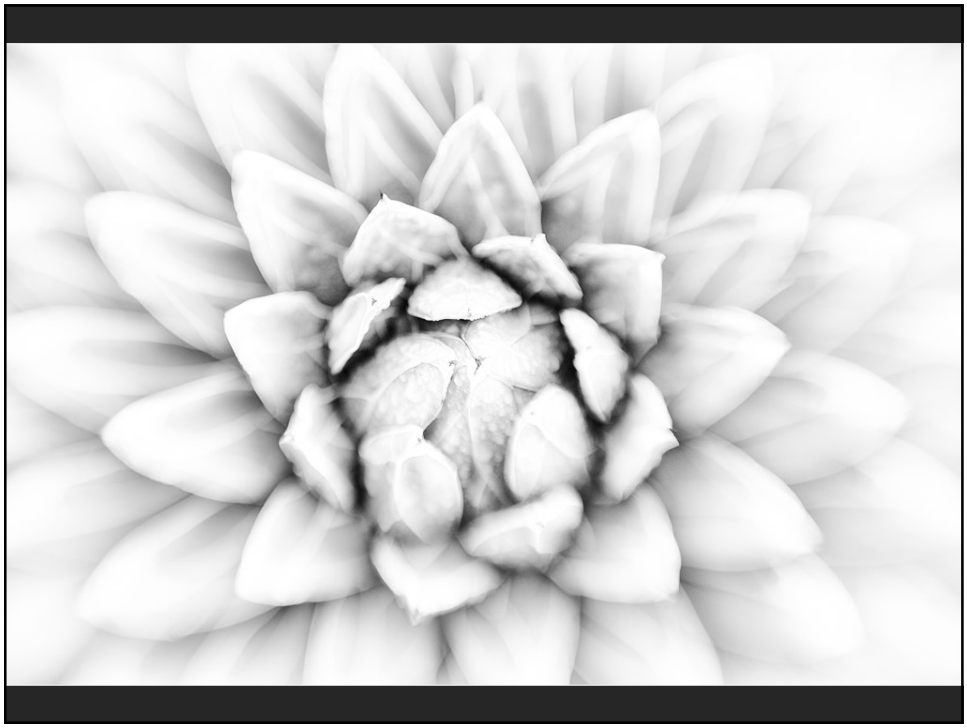

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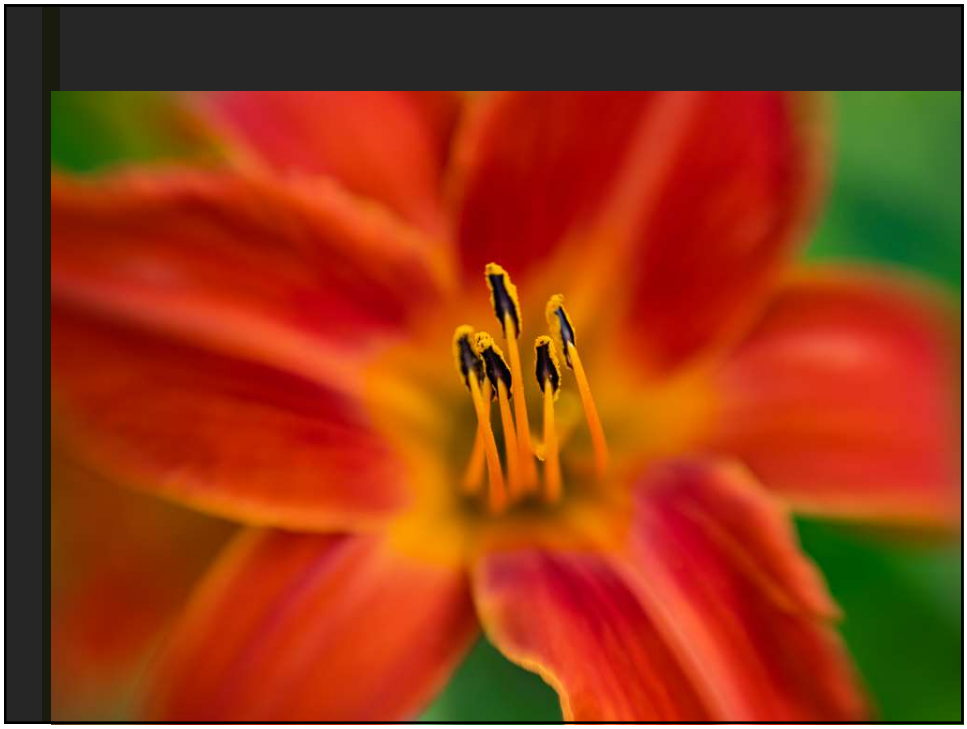

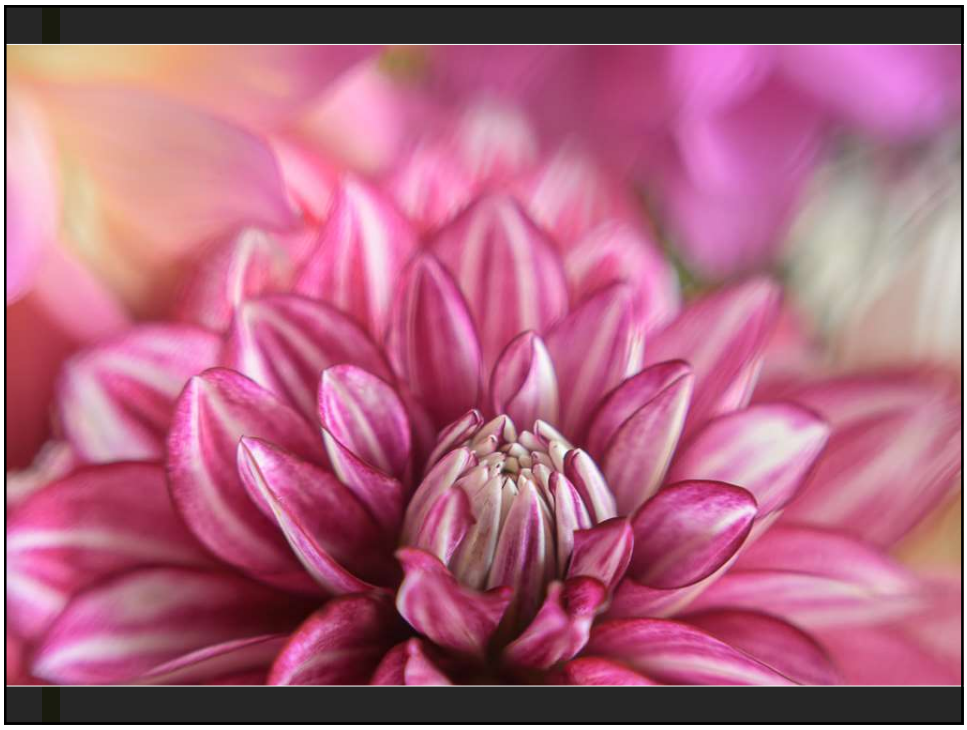

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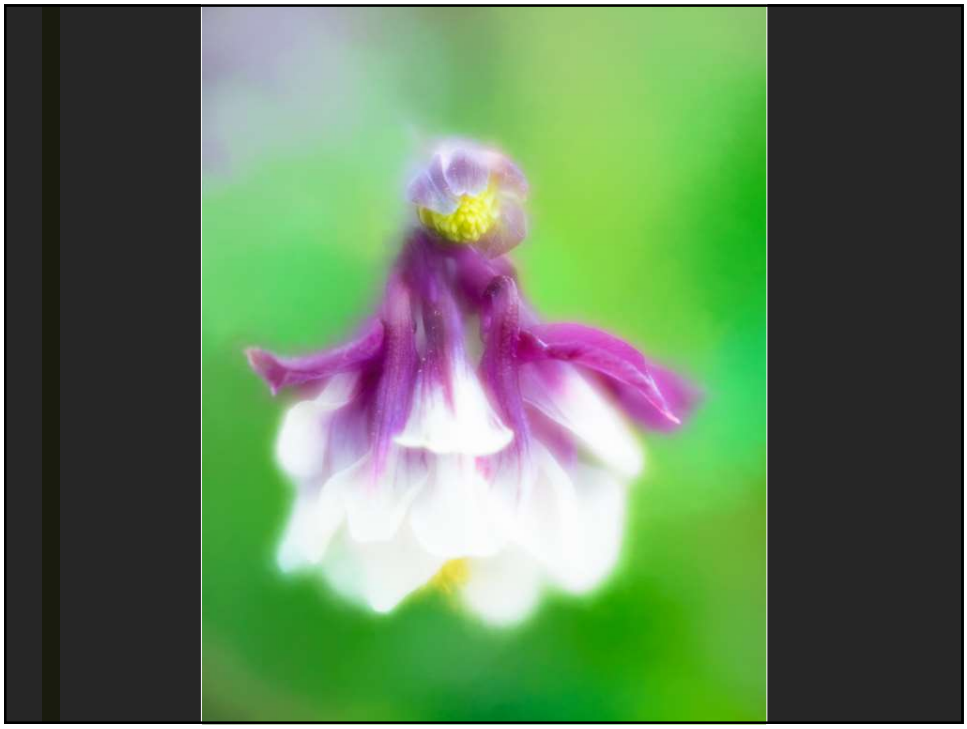

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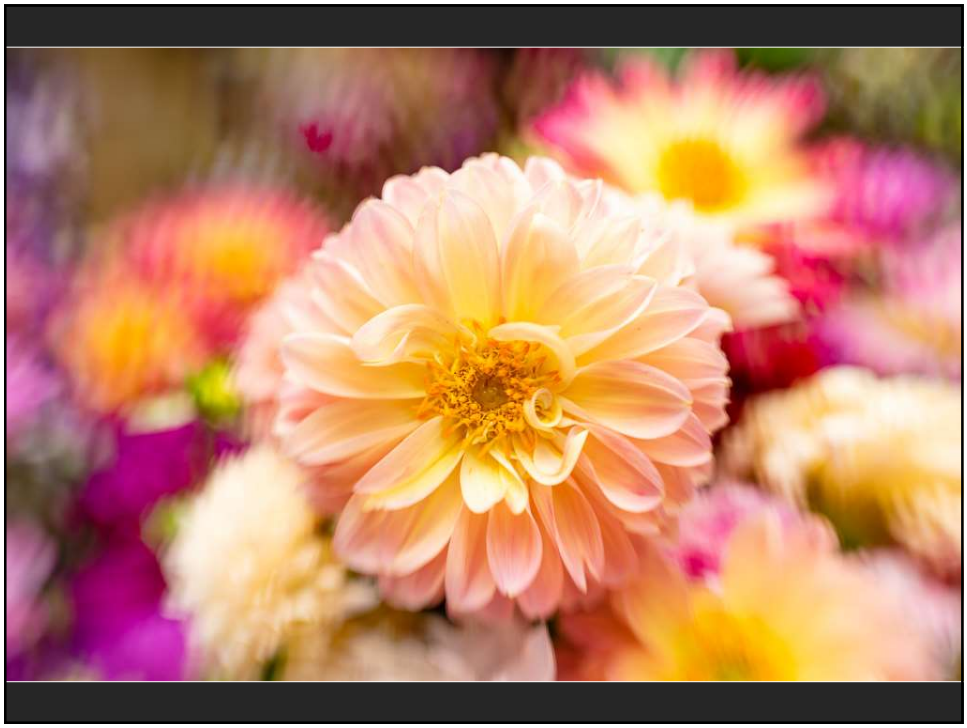

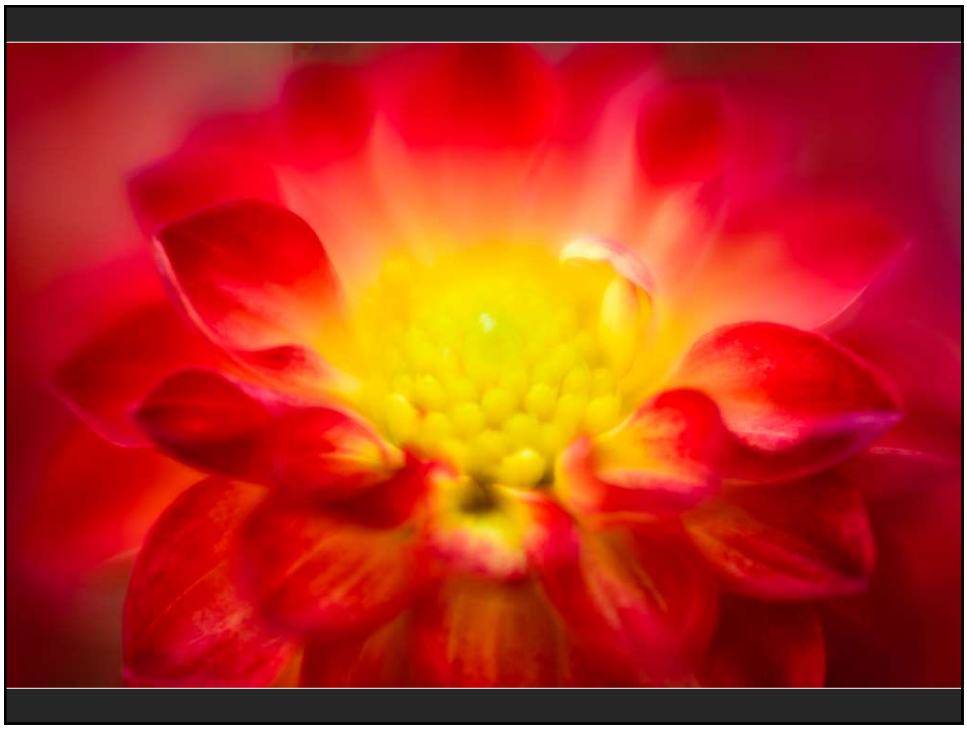

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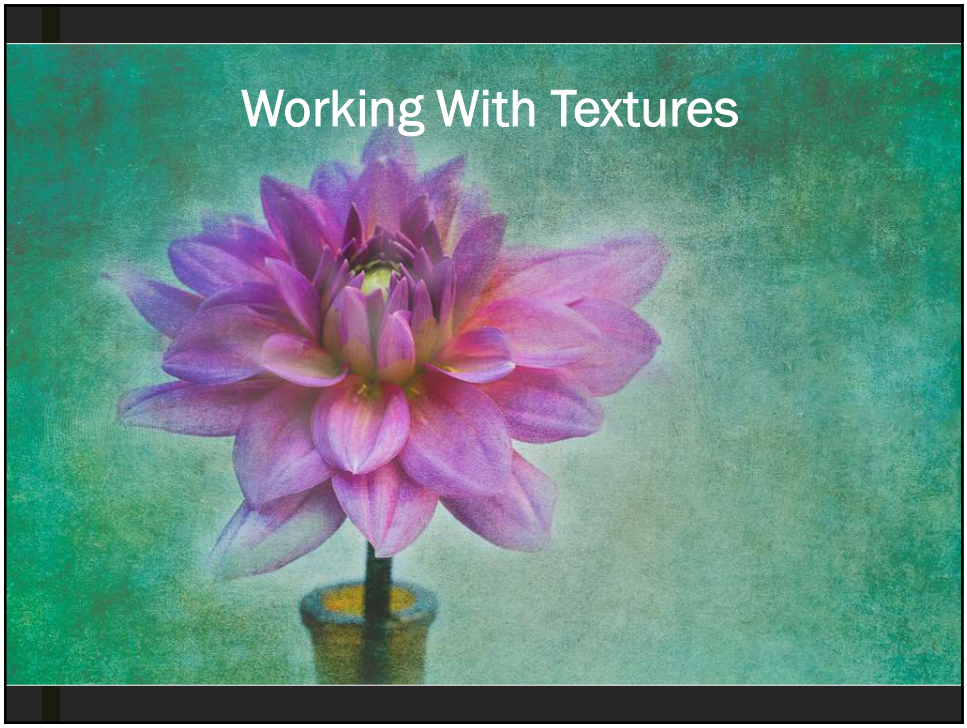

Working With Textures – Options

- Select images with negative space (lightbox images, clean backgrounds, simple subjects)
- Photoshop - Textures
  - *Open image in Photoshop & "Place Embedded" texture on the image, then work with blend modes, opacity and masking*
- Photoshop – Textures
  - *Open two images in Photoshop. Place one on top of the other, then work with blend modes, opacity and masking*
- Topaz Studio 2 – Textures

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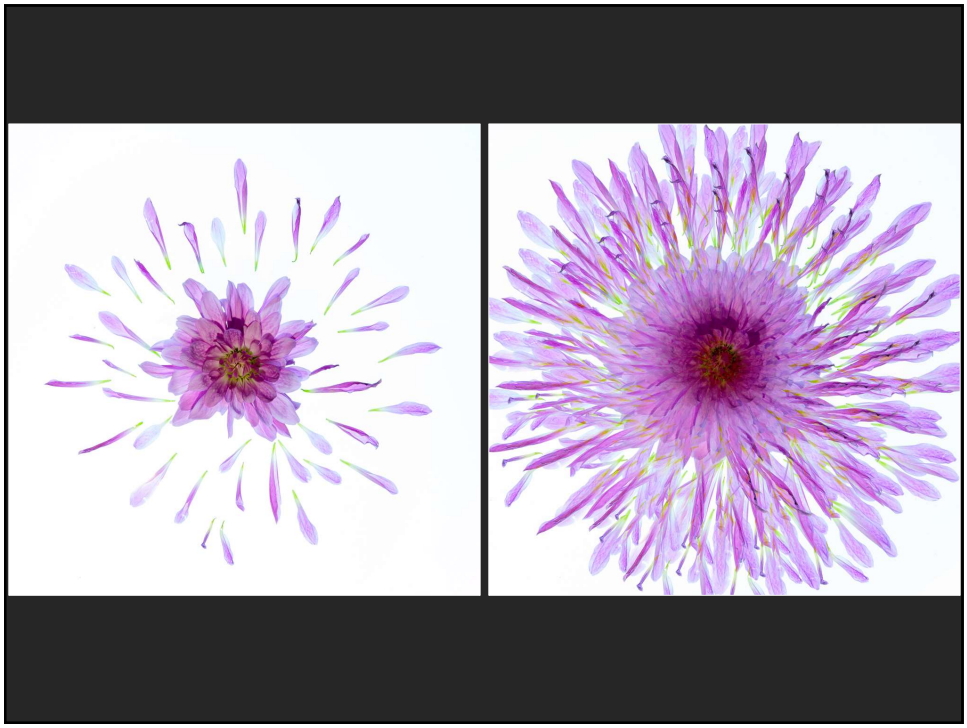

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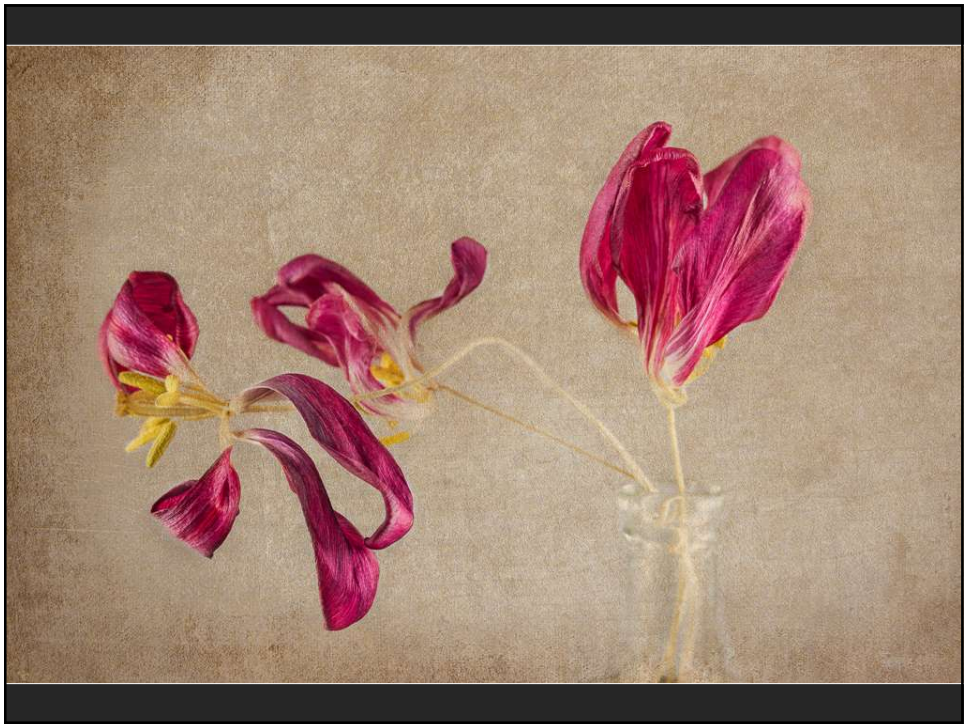

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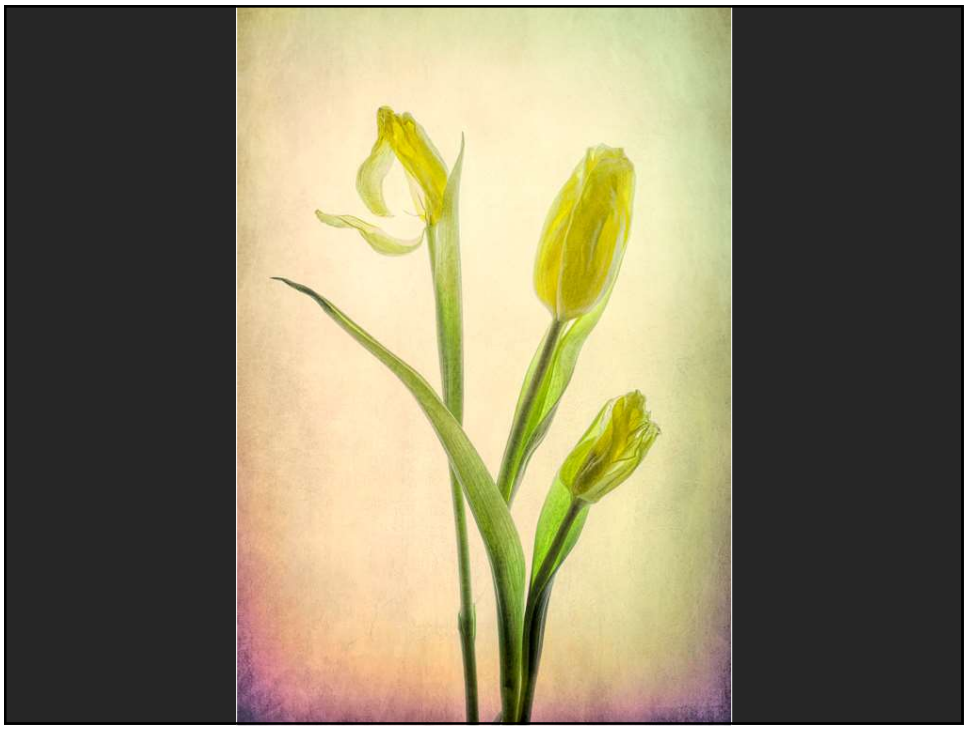

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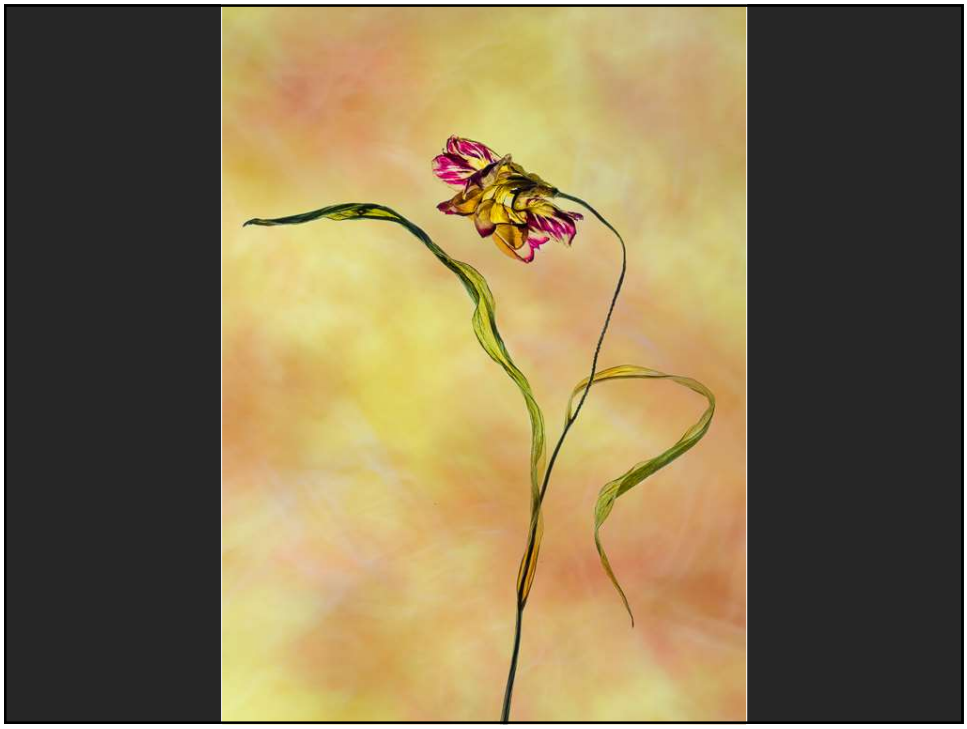

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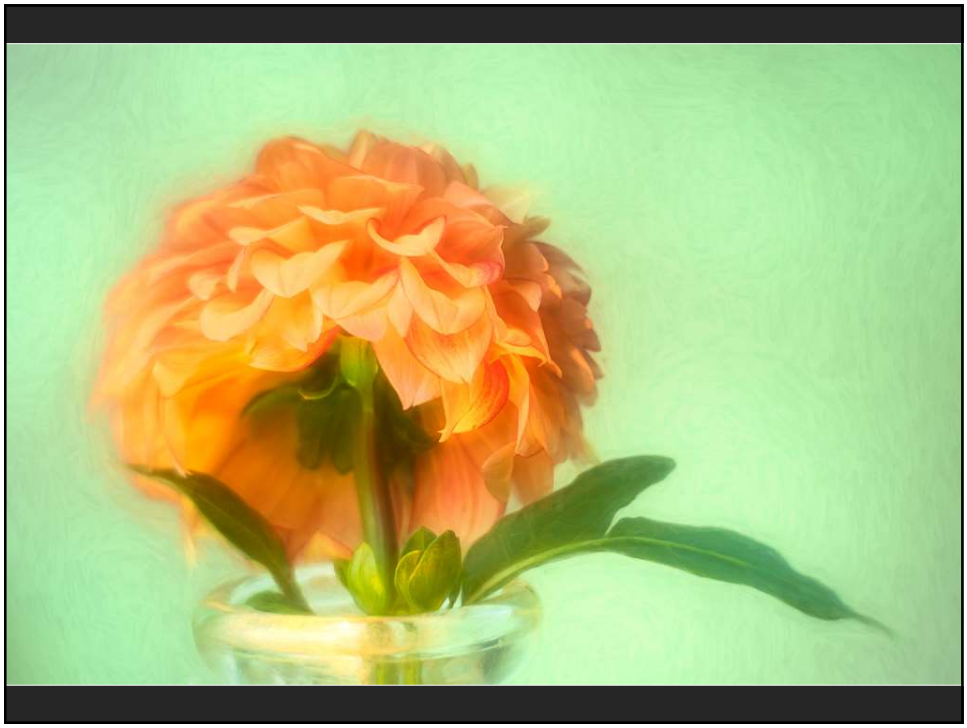

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