



CAPTURING GRACE

WITH AN INTIMATE FUSING OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART, **JEANNE GADOL** USES HER SECOND CAREER TO DEPICT THE NATURAL WORLD

Jeanne Gadol deftly combines her design and photographic skills to craft original graphic pieces of art using photographic images. The resulting body of work is all the more impressive because it's created by someone who's actually on a "second career." For years, Gadol worked in administrative, management and training positions, and taught university-level business classes. Through books and workshops, she learned design, and opened a home-based graphic and Website design business in 1992.

Gadol's images offer a unique way of seeing and appreciating nature and wildlife. In doing so, the artist reveals what's possible with today's latest technologies.

PCPhoto: How did you originally conceive your singular style of combining art and photography?

Jeanne Gadol: I enjoyed using Photoshop as a creative tool when I was a graphic/Website designer. As a photographer, I used it to correct and print my photographic images, so putting art and photography together was quite natural for me, although the way it began was a bit of an accident.

A few years ago, I was pondering what to submit to an upcoming art show called "Red, White & Black," which allowed entries of all mediums as long as they contained only those colors. I had a lovely picture of a black-necked stilt bird I considered entering, so I brought it into Photoshop and desaturated all the colors except red. The image looked a bit strange without the other hues so I moved it away from looking like a photograph and gave it a painterly look using the Palette Knife filter and then softened it with some blurring. I liked the effect, but decided to make it more whimsical so I resized the canvas by giving it more width and repeated the image six times to create "Seven Stilts." I printed it on watercolor paper to further enhance the look and submitted it in the show where it was well-received.

PCPhoto: The images become very original pieces of art. How do you feel these images differ from what you could create from a standard photograph?

Gadol: Now that I've created many photo creative art pieces, I realize the real challenge



By Mark Edward Harris | Photography By Jeanne Gadol

and satisfaction that I get from them is the way in which they allow me to put my personal interpretation onto an image or a related group of images. I feel that what I'm doing is exploring and celebrating the essence of the subject by superimposing my aesthetic and emotional reactions to them. They also provide a way for me to express the more whimsical, playful side of my nature.

PCPhoto: What would serve as an example of that?

Gadol: In 2003, I was on a photographic safari in Kenya where I was moved by the elephants and the way they interacted with one another. I was captivated by how they cared for their young, as well as their enormous size and unique shape. My picture "Ellies Big and Small" is comprised of four of my photographs and, I believe, captures my reaction to these amazing animals better than the individual photographs.

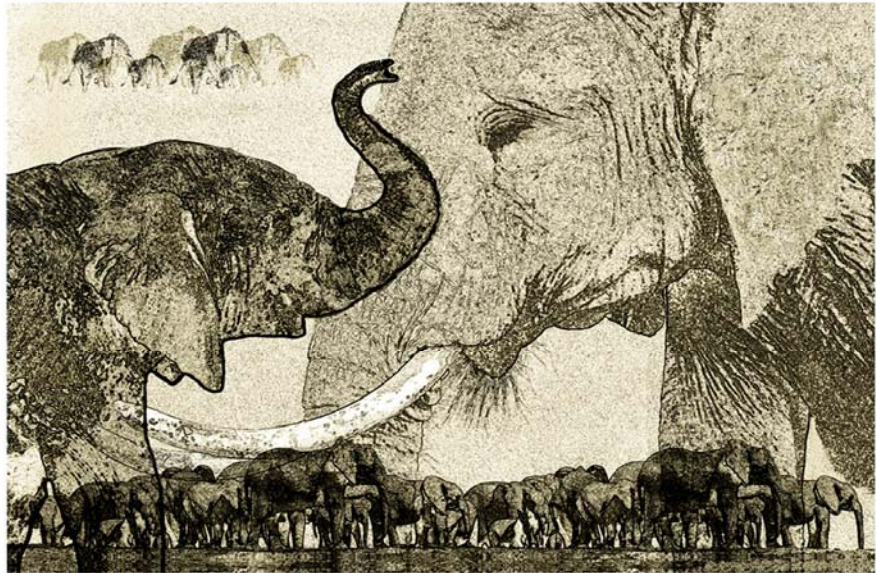
PCPhoto: What's your process to end up with these creations?

Gadol: Each one is quite different and they range from being based on just one or two images to seven or eight. I begin by thinking about the subject I want to explore and looking at a group of my photographs of that subject. I often use one image as the starting point and begin adding to it. It's a very interactive, trial-and-error process and I make heavy use of Undo and the History palette, as I find what does, and more often, what doesn't work. Most of my pieces are comprised of many layers that are blended with one another in a variety of ways and often have masks associated with them. The files get huge.

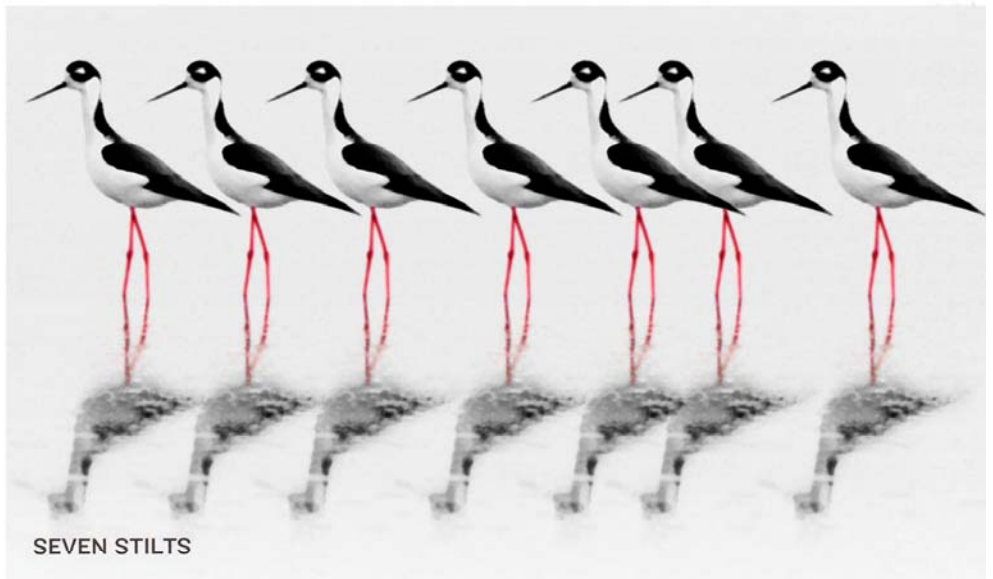
PCPhoto: How big can they get?

Gadol: Due to my heavy use of layers (both regular and adjustment), files easily can become over 200 MB while I'm working on them. Because this can get a bit cumbersome, I save a series of versions of the files. Periodically, I'll flatten all or some of the layers to reduce file size as I go. I save all versions for a while to make sure I won't want to go back and use any layers or portions of them. Finished, flattened files from which I print range from 15 to 40 MB.

PCPhoto: Are you still creating your initial images with film rather than digital? What type of equipment



ELLIES BIG AND SMALL



SEVEN STILTS

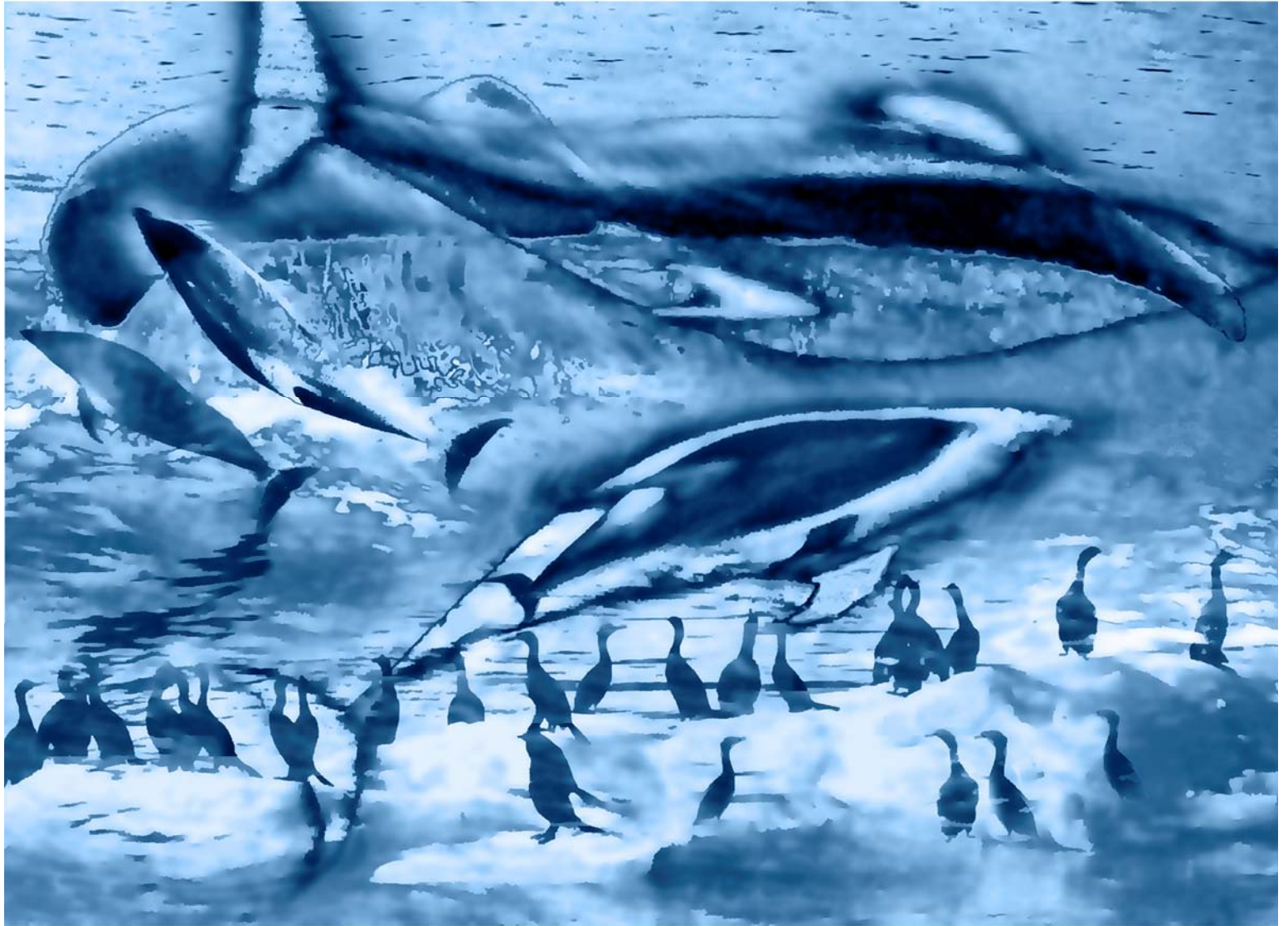
CAPTURING THE GRACE AND PERSONALITY OF ANIMALS IN THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHALLENGES ME...IT COMBINES PREPARATION, SKILL, SPEED AND LUCK.

are you working with, and how are you outputting your images?

Gadol: I recently purchased a Konica Minolta Maxxum 7D that I'm enjoying immensely; prior to that, I was shooting with a Konica Minolta Maxxum 7 so I can use all the same lenses. I have a Konica Minolta DiMAGE Scan Elite 5400 to scan

film images. I came late into the digital capture arena, even though I've been working with digital images for a long time.

I didn't like the physical bulk and weight of the digital SLR cameras and I could obtain a higher-resolution file from my scans. So, until recently, the advantages of digital capture weren't worth the



ELLIES BIG AND SMALL: Multiple images are combined to simulate the look of a fine etching.

SEVEN STILTS: Gadol used an image of a black-necked stilt to first explore the possibilities of the digital darkroom.

WHALE DREAMS & ANCIENT AFRICA: Gadol uses layers and masks to create complex juxtapositions of multiples image to which she applies select filters and color adjustments.



trade-offs for me. I use Extensis Portfolio as my database and have found that quick access to my pictures is very important when I'm in the creative process.

My computers run on Windows XP and I have the Epson Stylus Photo 2200 and 1280 for printing. I typically print my photo creative art pieces with archival inks on Epson Enhanced Matte paper, as I want them to have a graphic look. I usually print them at 8 x 12 inches, although in my home I have a 30 x 40-inch image called "Ancient Africa" printed on a friend's large-format printer. I depend heavily on my Wacom tablet during the creation process.

PCPhoto: How do you utilize the Wacom tablet, and what's its role in the creation of your work?

Gadol: The Wacom pen provides superb control and its pressure-sensitive capabilities allow me to achieve results not possible with a normal pointing device. I tend to use it toward the end of my creative process to enhance and fine-tune a piece.

The pen gives me the control I want for darkening and lightening areas of the picture, for example. I do this either directly on the layer by using the pen with the Dodge and Burn tools or by applying shades of gray with the Paintbrush tool on a new layer set to Overlay mode—areas lighter than 50% gray lighten the underlying layer and areas darker than 50% gray darken it. I also use the Wacom pen to work on layer masks to better bring out the details and eliminate extraneous areas for an enhanced total composition.

In addition, I often use the pen with the Paintbrush tool to change or add colors. I apply the desired colors with the pressure-sensitive pen onto a new layer, using the Color or Hue-Blending mode. Using various brush styles, especially the Natural Media brushes that come with Photoshop CS, I can create some wonderfully pleasing effects.

PCPhoto: You learned how to do design, photography and Photoshop through books and workshops. For those who are interested in achieving similar results—given that they, too, have great natural talent—what do you recommend for learning such skills?

Gadol: I tend to be very self-directed and internally motivated; I enjoy figuring things out and I love learning new things.



MAJESTIC PEACOCK

“I'M EXTREMELY EXCITED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF COMBINING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY WITH PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER TRADITIONAL ART FORMS...I SEE IT AS A NEW, GREAT FRONTIER OF CREATIVE EXPLORATION”

I find reading software manuals very valuable—yes, I actually lie down on my sofa and read software manuals. Watching and working through tutorials and videos that come with software also can be a great way to get started. I often don't remember detailed procedures right away, but I do remember the capabilities of the software and how to reference the details when I want them. For most software, that's enough, but Photoshop is such a complex program and so central to my creative work that I wanted more so I've read many books on addressing both digital darkroom and creative techniques.

The same is basically true for photography. I read a lot and study the images of photographers whose work resonates with me. I belong to a couple of photo clubs for sharing ideas and I take workshops from photographers who I believe have something specific to offer to my growth as a photographer.

But that's just how I do it—certainly not the best way for everyone. From the multitude of books, user groups, courses and workshops available, I'd encourage each person to proceed in the way that works the best for him or her.

PCPhoto: How would you describe your work?

Gadol: I'm a nature photographer. Looking for the beauty and patterns of common elements, such as leaves, rocks and waves, enhances my awareness and appreciation of my environment. I also enjoy photographing wildlife. Capturing the grace and personality of animals in their natural environment challenges me, as it combines preparation, skill, speed and luck. My images tend to be rather uncluttered and intimate, as I like getting involved with my subjects.

My photo creative art is very satisfying, as it allows me to use my photographic images to express myself, and my aesthetic and emotional reactions to the subjects of my images. I'm extremely excited about the possibilities of combining digital technology with photography and other traditional art forms as I see it as a new, great frontier of creative exploration. PC
To see more of Jeanne Gadol's photography, visit www.jg-photos.com.



MAJESTIC PEACOCK & CHEETAH IN THE MASAI MARA: Gadol sometimes will use patterns or extreme color to complement elements of her subject.



ZEBRA STRIPES:
A photograph that looks as if it was created with a brush rather than a camera captures the beauty of the zebra.

SO MANY SNOW GEESE: These snow geese fly against an intricate backdrop created by using the outlines of the birds.

