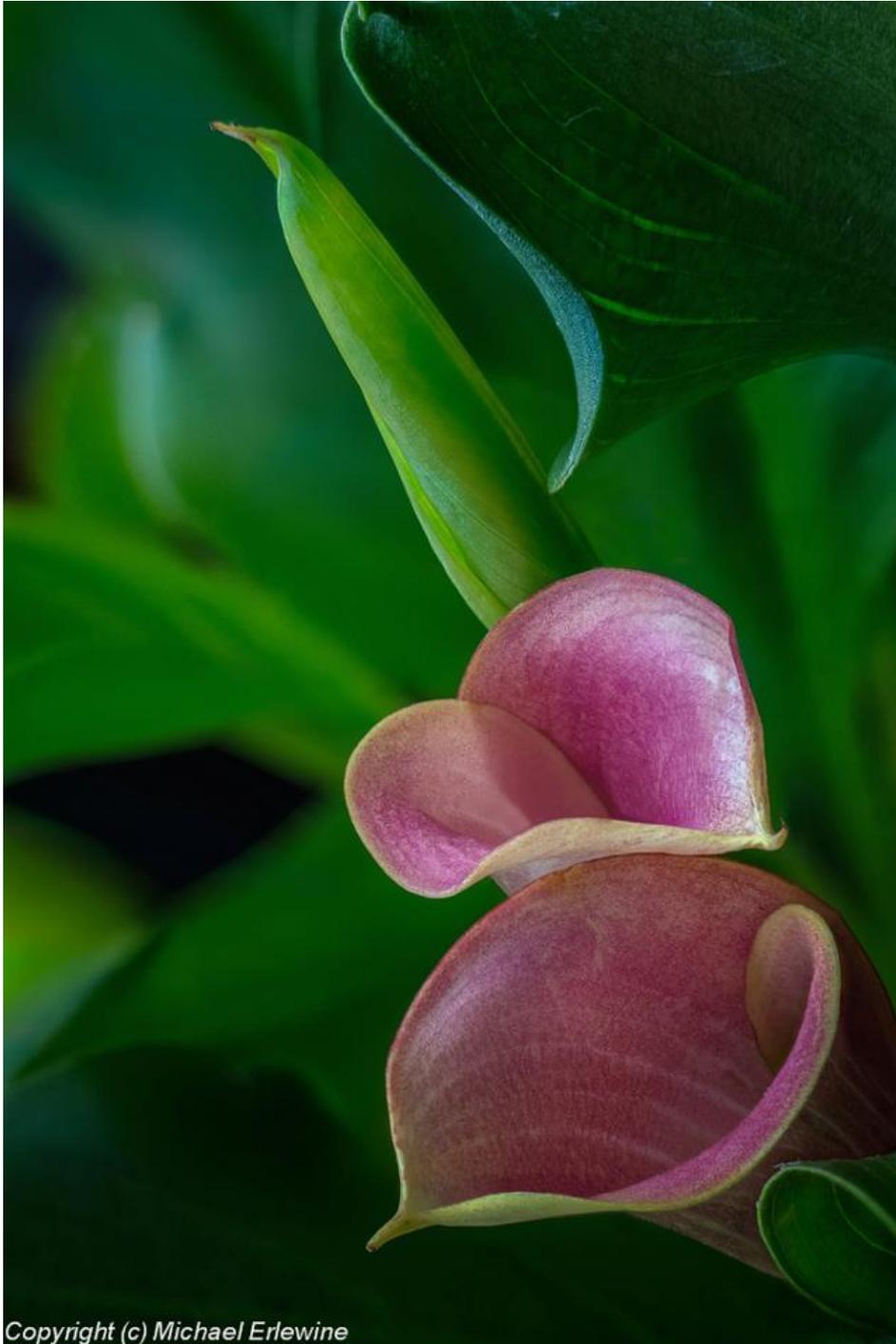


WHERE PROCESS IS PRODUCT

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By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)



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Photo taken with Nikon D800E camera, Printing Nikkor 150mm APO lens, and Zerene Stacker software.

Calla Lilies and Cyclamen are evergreen subjects. They never fail me and turn up fairly often at groceries and flower shops. I don't have much to work with these days, as I am pretty much indoors at this point in the year. So what am I working on?

This photo is a good example. I have a very responsive camera, the Nikon D800E, with a full 36 megapixel sensor, plus one of the sharpest lenses ever made, the Printing Nikkor 150mm f/2.8 APO lens, an industrial lens made for the highest-quality copy work.

I am trying to use the extreme sharpness of the Printing Nikkor lens to make certain parts of the photo stand out (like the flowers) to tell the eyes that what they see here is real and, at the same time, to show by the 'bokeh' (out-of-focus areas) that what we see is more than that, like the world of our own mind. If we look beyond the sharpness of the Calla Lilies, we end up peering into a world of shapes and colors that is more dreamlike than everyday reality.

Like most things I do, this is not a finished product, but rather the result of a process, itself the point of it all. Pay attention to the process, and the result takes care of itself. So what is that process?

In this photo the process is pure tedium, and attention to detail. This is not a snapshot, but 153 separate photos, each taken a millimeter or so from the next, so that the flowers (or whatever we choose) are in focus from front to back. And the Calla Lily has a little sharp point to drive this bit of reality home.

Because the aperture used here is somewhat wide, the background is not clearly in focus, but is blurred so that colors and shapes suggest... whatever comes to mind – a mood. These 153 layers are then compiled together using software, preserving the best detail in each layer to create a single image that portrays as much of the subject in focus as I wish, while leaving the rest to stir the imagination.

Unlike an ordinary photo, where we have, by definition, a single point and plane that draws our attention, in this photo there is no single point to capture our attention, and the eye is free to roam around and decide for itself what to look at. The absence of a single point liberates the mind in ways that an ordinary photo cannot do. This process is called "focus stacking."

The art of focus stacking is (at least in my work) to combine realism with the freedom of the imagination. In a way these are like fine-art paintings, which also do not have a single plane and point. Here the effect is similar to the paintings of artist Georgia O'Keefe.

I find this particular process (the process, mind you) of photographing liberating, which is why I do it. I am naturally impatient, so this very slow and careful process is a natural remedy for what ails me, and is thus liberating.

Hopefully you too can see some of the mind-clarifying process in the resulting photos. Yes, nature is beautiful, but beauty, as they say, is in the eye of the beholder. We look outward, but

we see within.

Probably more than you wanted to know, right?