

## Ethic of the Photo Touch-Up – © Mario Mariniello

With the coming of new digital technologies, it becomes very important to clearly state which policy is adopted by the photographer concerning the alteration of his own photographs. Here is my policy: all my photographs stick to these rules.

I identify three categories of photo touch-up:

1) *LIGHT touch-up*

These are alterations which are just directed to photo's quality improvement without changing the message.

Examples are: cropping, dust removal, contrast adjustment, colour control up to a reasonable level (see category 2).

Since these alterations are limited, they may be done without any restriction.

2) *TECHNICAL touch-up*

These are alterations which could have been done at the moment the shot was taken instead of doing them directly on the final image.

Examples are: converting an image from colour to black and white, colour control if the new colour is different from the one seen by the photographer during the shot, adding blur.

This kind of alterations can have an impact on the communicative power of a photo, although it does not really change its meaning.

A documentary photographer should use technical touch-up the least as possible. In any case, when he does, he is committed to *clearly state in a caption* under the photo which changes he made.

3) *INVASIVE touch-up*

These are alterations which change the sense of the photo as they introduce in the image something which was not seen by the photographer while taking the shot.

Examples are: adding a child on a desert street, convert a boring ocean view in a romantic dusk, pasting a sign on a wall close to the subject of the photo.

For no reason the documentary photographer can use invasive touch-up.

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