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Thanks everyone!

## Finding my Niche

[Dan Greenberg](#) Posts: 16April 5 edited April 6 in [General](#) [108.28.118.110](#)

I am a new member here at ASF, and I look forward to the opportunity to learn from you and to share any ideas that I have learned over the last 6 years. I love art and the artists that create it - so many fun stories out there!

I am a Nature Photographer, but I would like to narrow down my niche to get out of the gigantic pool of competition that I am swimming in. Rather than focusing on a geographical area, I would like to find a niche that jives with the emotional pull that Nature has on people. For example, the way that a smooth running stream eases tension, lowers blood pressure and raises esteem and happiness. Or how the intricate patterns of a flower can inspire wonder. Gardens and landscapes heal and make us happier. Is this a viable niche? If so, how do I present it?

Or, would I be better off choosing waterfalls and streams?

If you would like to see my work for reference, please visit [www.regreen.net](http://www.regreen.net). I will start loading it up on ASF soon, but having an idea for a niche will help me organize galleries, etc.

Many thanks!

Dan

WHO'S ONLINE 1[Quote](#) · [Like](#) · [Log](#)

## Comments

« [1](#) [2](#) »**[Ben Willows](#)** Posts: 22[April 6](#) [24.155.98.200](#)

Awesome question Dan!

I'm hoping that [@Cory Huff](#) [@Carolyn Edlund](#) or [@Renee Besta](#) will be able to provide their input here because I think they're the most qualified to answer this question. I'll be standing by and add my own .02 if no one else chimes in.

[Quote](#) · [Like](#) · [Log](#)**[Renee Besta](#)** Posts: 230[April 6](#) [71.92.227.77](#)

[@Ben Willows](#) Dan sent me a PM and I responded to his questions directly.

[Quote](#) · [Like](#) · [Log](#)**[Dan Greenberg](#)** Posts: 16[April 6](#) [108.28.118.110](#)

Thanks, Renee! I appreciate your taking some time from your deadline to help. I will definitely see if I can narrow down my work, and try Carolyn for more of the marketing answers.

 [Like](#) · [Log](#)**[patrick21](#)** Posts: 217[April 7](#) [99.56.46.139](#)

[@Dan Greenberg](#) Niche selection is so so critical.

Especially so in yours. As you mentioned there are so many great photographers, that are technically competent, that

photograph nature all day long.

Perhaps you have this amazing body of work. Work you know is incredible. Work you have compiled over years and years of travel and photography. Its likely really good work too. So what. Nobody cares.

It hurts to say that, to type that. But lots of times thats the case.

If you can't differentiate yourself than your are just up against too much competition.

Ok so you know all that, painful as it is, so how do you determine a niche. There are lots of articles on it all across the web. What I find is helpful is change ones thinking on the matter.

Instead of approaching the problem from the front come at it from the back.

Most people say here is my body of work... what niche can I possible create with it.

Thats the forward route.

Go backwards.

Go find an audience fist. Perhaps its a community about snapping turtles (random I know, just say a crazy video no youtube about it... anyway). Perhaps this community loves these turtles. They have forums, and Facebook group. They are rabid fans. Ok thats an audience.

So go take a few photos of snapping turtles. Post a few in that forum. See what people think. If somebody asks you to buy it then you are on the right track.

The example is random but the though process is not. A good niche starts with an audience you can target.

Lots of ways to approach it but that is one great way I like to think about it.



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**patrick21** Posts: 217

April 7 99.56.46.139

One more post on this as I love thinking about it.

Check this guys work out.

<https://www.instagram.com/wpicaro/>

I have been following him on Insta for awhile now. I think his work is really creative.

You know what I can say about Will.... he is the "matchbook guy."

You can refer to him about the nature of his work and immediately you know who I am talking about. That is when you have a proper niche. That's an epic smell test if you really have a niche.

So ask yourself that question when thinking about your niche as well. Are you defined enough that you could be called a "he is the \_\_\_\_\_ guy."

If so you are on the right track.

So what "guy" are you?



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**Ben Willows** Posts: 22

April 7 24.155.98.200

[@patrick21](#) Great guidance.

Here is another great example Dan: [www.sethcasteel.com](http://www.sethcasteel.com)

He is obviously the "underwater dog photography guy". The point is, no matter how obscure, the beauty of the internet is

that business models like his can now be very well supported and have an audience, whereas 5 or 10 years ago he could have NEVER seen success. Thanks, internet.

The point: Your net doesn't have to be nearly as widely cast as it used to.

“ [Quote](#) ·  [Like](#) · [Log](#)



[Dan Greenberg](#) Posts: 16

[April 7](#) [50.200.68.70](#)

Patrick,

Wow. Thanks so much! This is very thought-provoking. A few things come to mind, and I apologize if I write scatter-brained!

I've thought about becoming a "\_\_\_\_\_ guy", such as waterfalls. That sounds great if I had one kind of imagery to neatly fit there - a particular place, a particular item, etc. My question is whether this could be modified to include something less tactile, like "healing", "Nature's Power", etc?

You hit it perfectly in your first comment - there are a zillion nature photographers out there. I want to show it differently. I want to show it as more than just a pretty place. Scientists developed kevlar after analyzing spider webs. Central Park was built in New York to act as an air purifier. Architecture is designed to follow natural patterns. Patients heal faster when their rooms look out at green spaces. Stuff like that drives me and inspires me, but it doesn't neatly fit into a noun. Is there a way to market that?

I can't compete with the full-time photographers selling gorgeous photos of lighthouses and landmarks, mountain ranges, etc. I only get out part time. And if I choose a particular item to photograph, I will soon be engulfed by 1000 other photographers who have the time to do it every day.

But if I can harness my appreciation for nature in my marketing, and hit it abstractly, I might have a leg up. In many of my photos, the site doesn't matter, that flower can be on any tree around the world. But the beauty is there, and it captivates. Is there a way to market that?

Again, I apologize for being random. It's a fascinating topic!

Best,  
Dan

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**[Ben Willows](#)** Posts: 22

[April 7](#) [24.155.98.200](#)

Dan-

I personally keep coming back to the "healing" idea. I am by NO MEANS an expert, but it's an angle I've yet to see.

I think that hospitals, doctors offices, and even residences would all appreciate imagery that is soothing/healing.

You could even just fake it til you make it. Start going to doctors offices and hospitals and just be confident and let them know that you stumbled into this and you've had that reaction to your work. They've gotta hang some sort of imagery on their walls, so why not hang something that accomplishes two goals: beauty and healing.

The other benefit to this angle is that if/when you get an account, they'll likely spend at least thousands, if not ten's of thousands outfitting the entire space.

It's already a proven niche: [https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=healing photography](https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=healing%20photography)



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**[patrick21](#)** Posts: 217

[April 7](#) [99.56.46.139](#)

Always an option to become the "progression of wine guy"

<http://imgur.com/gallery/I2Mxz>



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**Dan Greenberg** Posts: 16

April 7 108.28.118.110

What a brilliant idea!

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**kimberlydhouston** Posts: 24

April 8 71.77.198.44

Ditto what [@Ben Willows](#) said -- it's a proven niche. I used to work in the marketing department of a large medical center and I know that various departments of the hospital wanted art with a soothing, healing aspect to adorn their walls, for example, the unit where cancer patients got chemo and then, obviously, the pediatric units.



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**Dan Greenberg** Posts: 16

April 8 166.137.244.19

Thanks [@Ben Willows](#) and [@kimberlydhouston](#) ! I'm excited to get some feedback. I'll see what I can pull together over the next few weeks!

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**Ben Willows** Posts: 22

April 8 24.155.98.200

Let's Go! Awesome stuff Dan.

LOL [@patrick21](#)

Thank you so much for your input [@kimberlydhouston](#), really awesome to hear it from a professional with experience

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**Renee Besta** Posts: 230

April 8 71.92.227.77

[@Dan Greenberg](#) [@kimberlydhouston](#) [@patrick21](#) [@Ben Willows](#)

Just wanted to point out another important factor that has been left out of this discussion in regards to finding a niche: your personal photographic post-processing style within that niche.

With the boatload of third-party plug-in software available today to edit and stylize images, finding a post-processing style that fits the emotional content of your images has never been easier.

Think onOne, Nik, Topaz, etc. Not to mention the scores of free presets available for Adobe Lightroom to create and refine your own special look.

Some people like dark and moody, while others use border or edge effects around their images. Some convert to black and white, then tone their images.

Others stick to HDR or high-key images. Or the grungy, hard-edge look.

Others add textures to their images, which works particularly well with flowers. Flowers may be flowers, but an entirely different look and feel can be conveyed simply by using various software effects.

As an example, I have a close photographer friend who is known for her exquisite floral and macro photography. She often replaces floral backgrounds with black or adds textures to them.

Check out this great image of a magnolia on the decline and ask yourself how it would look if she had not added some texture and the black background. Very blah, I think. She has totally changed the look and feel of this magnolia through creative thinking. This is one of my favorite floral images.





Therefore, it's not just narrowing down what subject matter you shoot. Take into consideration how you want to post-process and stylize your images and do some experimentation with various software. Download some Lightroom presets and have fun.

Here are two examples of images I processed in Adobe Lightroom and onOne Perfect Effects. The first one below shows an abandoned beach access staircase I photographed from the bluffs of a local seaside resort. Long ago, this staircase transported happy beachcombers down to the sea.

To lend this feel, I applied what is called a Lomo effect and added a darkroom-like edge effect (ragged border) around the image. Note the darker mood and blur around the image corners:







Here is an image I shot at a ghost mining town in the Nevada desert, not far from Death Valley National Park. Next to this town there is an outdoor sculpture garden, where European artists have created stunning large pieces juxtaposed against the stark, barren desert.

I added an old faded edge effect (like analog film days) and toned, dark mood. This sculpture is called A Tribute to Shorty, named after the first miner, Shorty Harris, who discovered gold in the area. Note how the pick ax aligns with the cloud formations.

Since this image captures a scene from long ago, I feel the effects work. What if I did not add those effects? The look and feel would be much different and akin to everything else you see posted on Google today. A straight shot here does not work, IMHO.



Perhaps you are familiar with Jeremy Cowart, a renowned celebrity and fine art photographer. Here's his advice in an article on PhotoShelter:

Jeremy Cowart: The Greatest Lesson I've Learned

<http://blog.photoshelter.com/2016/04/jeremy-cowart-the-greatest-lesson-ive-learned/>

Quote from Jeremy Cowart on the lessons he has learned:

I'd say to not put all your eggs into one basket. This career is truly a roller coaster. You're hot for a while. Then your cold for



a long while. Then you're hotter than ever again. It's just the nature of the business. So I've learned to diversify. I have many streams of income these days to help during the cold phases. By being a freelance photographer, you really are a CEO of your own company.

Marketing, business, finance, strategy, social media, communication...those are the things you really do day-to-day. Taking pictures is a cute little thing you do on the side.

Hope this helps!



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**Carolyn Edlund** Posts: 106

April 10 64.134.100.175

[@Dan Greenberg](#) get in touch with me and I will refer you to a friend who runs a website on the healing power of art. That will be a great place to get some publicity for this niche,

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**Carolyn Edlund** Posts: 106

April 10 64.134.100.175

[@Patrick Shanahan](#) I agree with you that you can work "backwards" and find a niche to fill so you can narrowly define your work and become a big fish in a small pond. I talk to artists about this topic frequently. Some feel this is "selling out" and

others embrace it.

Personally I was happy to design for my customer when I had my studio. It's definitely a business mindset. And if it dovetails with what you love to do, then so much the better.

I also find that moving your energies into a chosen niche can spur a lot of creative thinking. As you go deeply into that direction, you can come up with some amazing stuff and find that unique signature look that may end up with a natural progression into becoming that \_\_\_\_\_ guy.



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[Dan Greenberg](#) Posts: 16

[April 10](#) [108.28.118.110](#)

Wow guys!

This is the most thoughtful dialogue I've ever seen on one of my posts in any platform. Thank you!

[@Renee Besta](#) your expertise on media is very helpful. I will read up on your suggestions. One question I have now is how to upsell the good stuff I'm migrating to without making my past customers feel that they have something bad? I also have some older inventory on hand that I still need to sell at shows.

[@Patrick Shanahan](#) great idea. Working backwards in general saves me a lot of time when I remind myself to do it! This is an interesting perspective.

[@Carolyn Edlund](#) will do! I appreciate your thinking of me!

[@Ben Willows](#) your motivation is very helpful. Keep it up - I need it! First show on 24th is getting close!

Again, thanks all! Please keep it coming! I am scrambling now, but like having bookmarks for later when I have more time!



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**Renee Besta** Posts: 230

April 10 71.92.227.77

[@Dan Greenberg](#) Glad you found this dialog useful.


Wanted to pass along a great article and advice on the PhotoShelter blog about a photographer living in Mexico who found his niche through his tequila blog. He now shoots unique images of tequila agave landscapes.

6 Steps To Conquering A Niche Photo Market

<http://blog.photoshelter.com/2010/08/6-steps-to-conquering-a-niche-photo-market/>

There's a nice video included, too.

[Interview with tequila photographer Ben Olivares](#) from [PhotoShelter.com](#) on [Vimeo](#).

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**Carl Rubino** Posts: 5

April 29 50.108.211.84

I'm brand new on this site and Forum, but it seems to me [@Dan Greenberg](#) that you just defined your narrower niche in your first post on this subject...



“ [Quote](#) ·  [1 Like](#) · [Log](#)



**Dan Greenberg** Posts: 16

April 29 166.137.244.52

Thanks [@Carl Rubino](#) ! I've been struggling with it for about 2 years now. I finally feel like I'm getting somewhere.

What about it do you like the most?

What is your focus in your work?

“ [Quote](#) ·  [Like](#) · [Log](#)

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**[Carl Rubino](#)** Posts: 5

[April 30](#) edited [April 30](#) [70.209.134.142](#)

I was referring to your focus [@Dan Greenberg](#) upon the healing aspects of landscape and similar photography and the appeal of that work to hospitals, the medical profession and people who related to that type of work, and felt that you were describing that as your niche I am still trying to figure out mine. I work in landscape paren or how I see it", abstract, and all sorts of multiple exposure. You can see mine at [www.carlrubinophotography.com](http://www.carlrubinophotography.com). This is my present site, as I have just started working on my art store front site and it is not yet live

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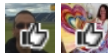
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**[kentsullivan](#)** Posts: 3

[May 2](#) [72.189.67.35](#)

Dan, it is a really good niche. I have been commissioned by several hospitals. Some of my best commissions! "Art and Healing at Mayo Clinic" is a book that features my art. Today the health care community is like the Medici's. Large budgets, more and more interest in "evidence-based art therapy". Check out this article <https://www.healthdesign.org/chd/research/guide-evidence-based-art> . Go for it!



“ [Quote](#) ·  [2 Like](#) · [Log](#)

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**[Dan Greenberg](#)** Posts: 16

[May 2](#) [108.28.118.110](#)

Thanks very much for the thoughtful posts! [@Carl Rubino](#) I enjoyed looking through your photos on your site. Your multiple exposure images are wonderful! That is a great niche there - I haven't seen anything like it!

[@kentsullivan](#) I will find a quiet corner to read the article. I'm liking the attention art is getting in hospitals and doctors' offices. Healing gardens have been catching on, so I think that art is the next logical step. I'm glad to hear about your commissions there. Do you contact a particular doctor? Nurse? Interior designer for the hospital?

Again, thanks!



“ [Quote](#) · [Like](#) · [Log](#)

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**Carl Rubino** Posts: 5

[May 3](#) [64.19.65.210](#)

Thanks [@Dan Greenberg](#) I agree that there is a niche for my multiple exposure work (street, human form and landscape). One photo in this work has been a winner in Black & White Magazine's Single Image Contest and one of my portfolios was a winner in Black & White Magazine's 2015 Portfolio Contest and a Spotlight Award winner, and will be featured in a four page spread in the October 2016 issue. So I guess the work is "good", but I think that niche is collectors, but I'm not sure how to reach them.

But my bigger problem is this, and I would appreciate anyone's comment on the following niche dilemma.

I think I really have three areas in which I produce work I am really excited about: multiple exposure, landscape/contemplative, and abstract (some from landscape and some from found objects and man-made). My abstract sells the most in a local gallery and my landscape/contemplative runs a close second. I don't really want to "give up" any of them. I certainly understand the concept of focusing on one narrow niche and marketing solely to that group, and would have to agree that it is more likely to maximize sales and make for effective marketing than "shotgunning" several niches. But I'm not sure I want to make the artistic sacrifice that it would require to limit my site and promo to only one area.

I wonder about creating 3 categories (one for each of these major areas) that would appear on the page that the site opens on, and subcategories under each (eg Landscape/Contemplative for a Category with Trees, Rivers, Contemplative, etc) as subcategories under that, and the same concept for Multiple Exposure/Limited Edition Gallery and for Abstract Gallery. I know I can do this, technically, but I wonder about whether I can successfully market if instead of trying to market all three at once, I focus my marketing effort on one of them, or on one at a time, and at the same time have the other two on the site in case anyone who comes to the site for the marketed gallery wants to look at the other work, or in case I want to send certain people to another gallery.

Anybody have any ideas. I know it is strongly suggested in the Support materials not to defy the rule of "one niche only" and I certainly understand that wisdom, but I don't want to eliminate my other themes.

Thanks for any thoughts that anyone may have...Carl

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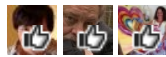


**[Carolyn Edlund](#)** Posts: 106

May 3 71.16.172.117

[@Carl Rubino](#) I certainly think that you can "try" anything that you like. Each artist website (and marketing plan) is a work in progress. If you included all three categories on your site and focused efforts on one of them at a time, you could gauge your results and see how it worked for you.

Then, if you determine that it would be best not to include all three bodies of work, you could make those changes on your website. That's the good part. A sales manager once told me "We aren't selling nuclear bombs here. There is room for trial and error." And he was right. See what works for you - and just maybe, you can break the "one niche only" rule. Who knows??



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**[Dan Greenberg](#)** Posts: 16

May 3 108.28.118.110

[@Carl Rubino](#) I see your point. It's difficult to stop producing something you love or have had success with. I agree with [@Carolyn Edlund](#) - try it and see if it keeps working. Just be careful to clearly organize everything and not confuse your visitors.

That said, purging can be liberating as well. In switching my website, I cut my available images in half. It was difficult work, but it forced me to look at each image as a piece of my full portfolio. If it didn't fit, or wasn't the best I could do, I eliminated it.

Think of this analogy - if I have my 5 favorite shirts in my closet I get to wear them all every week. If I have 50 shirts I will have 5 favorites, 10 I never wear, and another 35 to consider at 07:00 when I can't think straight. Sometimes it's more trouble to manage a large inventory.

Pictures are not shirts, though. If you have a big enough following to support all of your portfolios you must listen to them.

I hope I didn't make the water muddy. I hope you find what you need and have fun doing it!



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**Renee Besta** Posts: 230

May 4 71.92.227.77

[@Dan Greenberg](#) Purging is indeed very liberating. Most photographers have way too many images on their websites, as I have commented before in other forum discussions.

Potential buyers do not have time to browse everything. Artists should only show their very best work for optimal results. Sometimes it is tempting to show a wide variety of images, knowing that people have different tastes.

But that does nothing to narrow your niche and only serves to make you a generalist. This muddies your message.

FYI, since we are discussing the health industry niche, here are some great resources on the healing power of art and how medical facilities are using art to relieve stress and anxiety, and facilitate healing.

Key takeaway:

"If an art installation gets a patient out of his room or paintings take a person's mind off their pain and lower their stress levels, the art isn't just decorative anymore."

Great NBC News article The Healing Power of Art: Can Hospital Collections Help?

<http://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/healing-power-art-can-hospital-collections-help-n208966>

10 Reasons to Consider Placing Your Art in Healthcare and Wellness Venues by Renée Phillips, Director of Manhattan Arts International, arts advocate and consultant

<http://www.renee-phillips.com/10-reasons-to-consider-placing-your-art-in-healthcare-and-wellness-venues/>

The Healing Power of Art and Artists website: <http://www.healing-power-of-art.org/>



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**Carl Rubino** Posts: 5

May 4 50.108.214.229

Thanks @Carolyn Edlund and @Dan Greenberg for your responses. I appreciate the suggestions in both. It's great having this forum to share suggestions and information on. What a great wealth of knowledge...Thanks...Carl

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**Carolyn Edlund** Posts: 106

May 5 65.48.240.42

Thanks @Renee Besta for posting Renee Phillips' excellent website "The Healing Power of Art" - Renee does such a great job of promoting artists and is very devoted to being an advocate.

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**Dan Greenberg** Posts: 16

May 6 50.200.68.70

Thanks for the information. I'm going to visit / print and read this weekend!  
@Renee Besta your contributions to this thread have been phenomenal. Thanks!

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