



# How Aperture Works

## s0010 The Aperture Workspace

- p0010 Aperture is part of Apple's 'Pro' application line-up, where it sits beside Final Cut Studio, Logic and Shake. As such, it sports the distinctive dark interface that Apple uses for these products, and works best on high resolution displays, as it adopts a smaller on-screen font and a range of complex panels and palettes. It's even better when spread across two screens, where the management and editing workspaces will be separated out from each other and your pictures will have room to breathe.
- p0015 When it upgraded the application to Version 3, Apple made it clear that it was a suitable next step for anyone who does most of their photo management through iPhoto, its consumer editing application. Not only did it switch to a white box, like iPhoto, but the interface had an overhaul, with the introduction of friendlier icons, direct posting to Facebook and Flickr, and the Places and Faces features of iPhoto.
- p0020 The interface is split into resizable areas dedicated to specific tasks, such as Project management, image editing, photo browsing, and viewing at larger sizes. Each one is contained within the Aperture application interface, rather



photos, invoking the loupe, applying keywords to your files, posting to photo sharing sites and filtering the contents of your current project according to the settings in Faces and Places.

- p0035 The control bar, invoked by tapping **D**, sits at the very bottom of the screen. It handles the way in which your images are displayed in the Viewer and – if you've called up the relevant dialogs – provides for an easy way to rate pictures, add keywords (**Shift D**) and skip through your Library.
- p0040 Everyone will use Aperture in a different way, and while some will never step out of the regular interface layout, others will spend all of their time working in full screen. Aperture 3 sports a new full screen Browser, which supplements the existing Full Screen editing mode. Tap **F** to switch back and forth between Full Screen and the regular windowed mode.
- p0045 To use the full screen Browser, click Projects at the top of the Library Inspector and then tap **F**. Your projects are laid out in piles on a black background. Rolling your mouse across them lets you preview their contents, and double-clicking opens the Project for working on.
- p0050 In Full Screen mode it is particularly beneficial to have a good working knowledge of Aperture's keyboard shortcuts, as this will allow you to work without constantly revealing the hidden toolbars and menus that sit at the top and bottom of the screen.
- p0055 In this chapter we will examine each element of the Aperture interface in detail, walking you through the various options open to power users and explaining how to use each to best effect. We'll also point out those essential keyboard shortcuts wherever they apply.
- p0060 First, though, we'll take you through how Aperture stores your images. A thorough understanding of its filing system goes a long way to helping understand how it applies edits and adjustments to your files.

## s0015 How Aperture Stores Your Images

- p0065 Aperture stores all of your images in its Library. Under the hood, this is a complex collection of folders, subfolders, packaged files and original images, accompanied by thumbnails, previews and metadata files describing how they should be organized and what changes you have made to them.
- p0070 At a system level – on your hard drive – your images are organized in a complex series of embedded folders hidden inside a package in your Pictures folder called Aperture Library (Fig. 2.2). Double-clicking this will open Aperture, but right-clicking and selecting Show Package Contents will open it up for inspection. While there is no harm in taking a look at what it contains, you should resist the temptation to fiddle with its contents, as doing so could cause irreparable damage to your photo library, and you risk losing some or all of your images.
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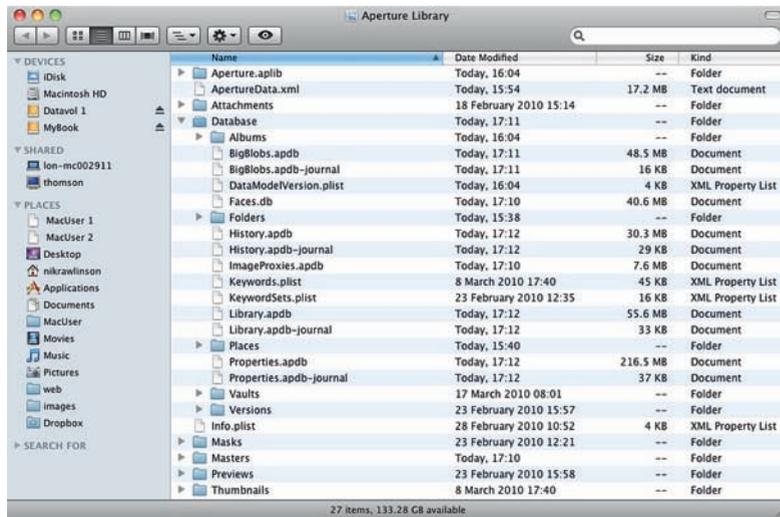


FIG. 2.2 Any images you import into Aperture directly are stored in its library, a packaged folder than can be explored through the Finder. Never tamper with the contents or you could irreparably damage your collection.

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Within this package you'll see a series of subfolders. These are the roots of an extensive folder tree that contains not only your images but also any new versions you have made by editing and attaching any metadata. Should you suffer an irrevocable failure of some kind, you will be able to retrieve your original images from these folders. They are organized by date in a folder called Masters, with year, month and date folders inside it.

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Fortunately all of this is hidden inside Aperture itself, which makes a thorough understanding of the Library's underlying directory structure unnecessary. All images are organized in the Library panel and selected in the Browser, which presents lists or thumbnails of files below the main editing window, the Viewer, or in Full Screen mode (Fig. 2.3).

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The precise subdivisions of your images are up to you. If you want, you can have a single large Project containing everything you've ever imported, although this would be barely any easier to navigate than the on-disk file structure. Instead, you should use Projects to split your photos by assignment or subject – say, France, Jill's Wedding, and so on – with albums inside each one to further categorize the contents – such as Lyon, Paris, Marseilles, and Dress, Cake, Ceremony in the examples above. Supplementary to these are Light Tables, used to help sort and filter your images, Web Galleries, Pages and Journals used to publish them online, and Books.

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Above your Projects are Aperture's 'Smart' folders. These are automatically populated when you import images into Projects elsewhere in the application, and then start to rate them, and you can add your own Smart Folders to further automate your photo management. With the pre-defined Smart

Folders you have immediate access to the very best images across all categories by clicking on the automatically-maintained five-star group in the Library. This will help when it comes to maintaining a portfolio of your best work. The default Smart Albums will also identify images imported in the last week or month, videos that appear in your library and any images you have rejected.

p0095 The Projects entry at the very top of the Library Inspector shows thumbnail views of every Project you have created in the application. Rolling your mouse across them from left to right or right to left flicks through all of the images they contain, allowing you to quickly preview their contents, so helping you distinguish between similarly-named Projects (Italy 2008 and Italy 2009, for example).

p0100 We'll explore these subdivisions in greater detail in the pages that follow.

## s0020 Digital Masters and Versions

p0105 Every photo you import into Aperture is a Digital Master. Regardless of its format, it is considered sacred within the application and will never be touched by any of the editing tools at your disposal. Even cropped images still exist in their original format in the directory structure we described above, so that should you suffer a serious drive corruption, after which Aperture can no longer open your library itself, you can still go back in and manually copy out the images yourself. This assumes, of course, that the drive hasn't failed, in which case you may need to employ the services of expensive data recovery specialists.

p0110 When you use the Adjustments panel to edit an image for the first time, Aperture creates what it calls a Version. It will then show a small numeric icon in the corner of the original showing how many Versions (including the master) it now holds in its library. Digital masters and their Versions are organized into Stacks, which can be expanded and contracted by clicking on the afore-mentioned icon, called the Stack button. Stacks are covered in

AQ4 depth, starting on page xx (Fig. 2.4).

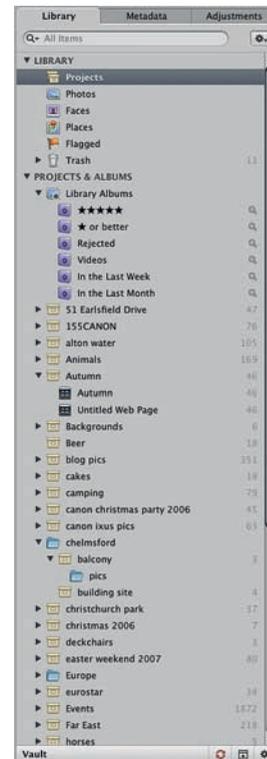


FIG. 2.3 The Library Inspector organizes not only projects, but also folders, albums, smart albums and the products you make with your images, such as web pages, galleries, journals and books.



FIG. 2.4 Whenever you make an adjustment to a Digital Master, Aperture creates a new Version. This sports a numeric badge, which shows how many versions of the picture exist in your library.

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## Browsing and Organizing Images

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Images are edited in the Viewer and organized in the Browser. The Browser is a collection of thumbnails or image names, which can either take over the whole of your screen or share the screen space with the Viewer, allowing you to work on several images in quick succession by editing them in the Viewer and then clicking in the Browser strip to move to the next one.

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Press **V** to cycle through the various interface modes – Browser Only, Split View or Viewer. When viewing thumbnails in Browser Only mode the size of the thumbnail is set using the slider at the bottom of the interface. Stacks, meanwhile, are outlined in a darker gray border that groups related images together.

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In the List view, where the thumbnails are swapped for a more conventional file listing (also showing metadata such as ratings, labels, aperture, shutter speed and so on), Versions are organized within a folder that takes the name of the original image. It doesn't look like a folder, since it also sports the Digital Master's shooting metadata, but a disclosure triangle in the left-hand margin betrays its true purpose, and in this respect it works just like folders in the Finder.

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If you have already made some edits to a photo and want to make another copy so you can try an alternative set of adjustments, you have two options. **⌘ V** will copy the currently selected Version and all of its adjustments to a new Version in the Stack, allowing you to pick up further adjustments from the point you have already reached without doing further edits to what could already be a perfectly tweaked Version. **⌘ G**, meanwhile, creates a fresh copy of the original untouched image, allowing you to start making adjustments from scratch, giving you two distinct Versions that you can then go on to compare side by side. Whichever you choose, the resulting copy will be added to the current Stack.

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Versions can be treated in exactly the same way as masters; you can print, copy, duplicate and export them. They can be rated separately from the original, you can have as many subsequent editions as you like, and you can use any one of them, or indeed several editions of the same master, in a single Book, Gallery, Light Table, Web Page or Journal.

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## Library Inspector

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The Library Inspector is where you will do most of your organization. It shows top-level folders, projects, and the products you're making with your images, such as Light Tables, Galleries and Books. It doesn't show individual images as these are organized through the Browser, which sits below or to one side of the Viewer.

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The Library Inspector is pre-filled with Smart Folders that organize your images by rating or data, to which you can add your own Projects, Albums, Smart Albums, Books, Light Tables, Web Galleries, Web Journals and Web Pages.

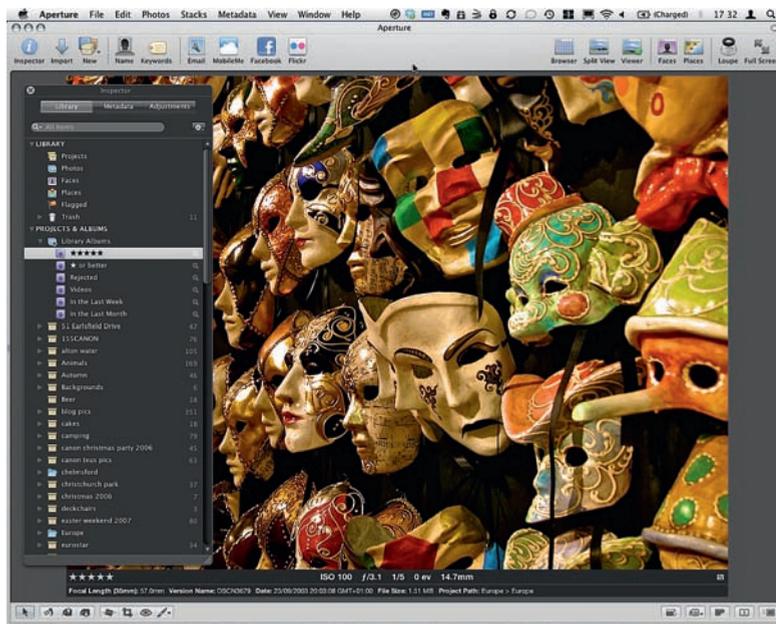


FIG. 2.5 Many elements of the Aperture interface are duplicated in the form of HUDs, including the Inspector, containing the Library, Metadata and Adjustments panels.

p0150 The combined Library, Metadata and Adjustments panel can be quickly hidden and revealed by clicking the Inspector button on the main toolbar or using the keyboard shortcut **I**. This is particularly useful when working on a small screen, such as that on a 13-inch MacBook. In this instance, the same collection of Inspector panels can be used through a HUD, called up by tapping **H** with an image selected (Fig. 2.5).

## s0035 Browser

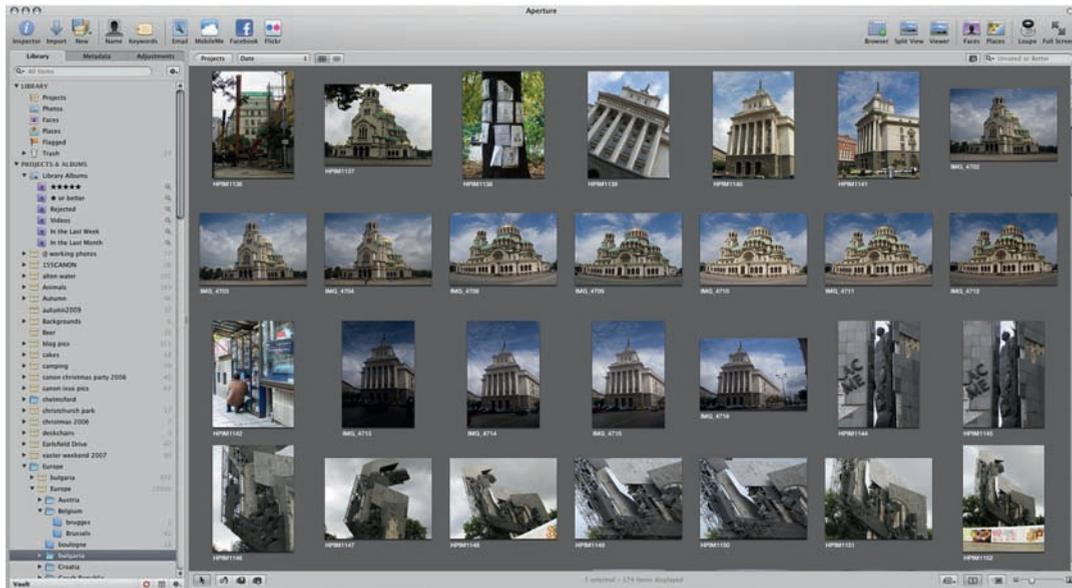
p0155 The Browser is the panel through which you organize your photos and files. It works in tandem with the Library Inspector and shows the images displayed inside each Project, Web Album, folder, and so on (Fig. 2.6a and b). It is invoked by clicking the Browser button on the toolbar, or by pressing **V** to cycle through the various view modes.

p0160 The Browser can display your images in two ways: either as thumbnails organized in a grid formation (**ctrl G**), or as a list of files (**ctrl L**) accompanied by supplementary metadata showing key attributes including aperture, shutter speed, creation data and focal length. You can sort on any of these attributes by clicking the header above each column. Clicking a selected column header for a second time reverses the sorting order. So, clicking the ISO column once will sort your images in order of increasing

# Apple Aperture 3



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FIG. 2.6a and b The Browser usually appears as a strip running across the bottom of the interface, below the Viewer. However, it can also be maximized to occupy the majority of the screen for those occasions when organization and management are more important than adjustments and editing.

sensitivity – say, from 100ISO to 1600ISO – while tapping it for a second time would sort it in order of decreasing sensitivity. Depending how you use this feature, it could let you quickly identify underexposed or grainy images, depending on which end of the scale is uppermost.

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Dragging the slider at the bottom of the screen adjusts the size of the thumbnails displayed in any Browser view, allowing you to get the best of both worlds by selecting the List view and maximizing the thumbnails. The results won't be as large as they are in the grid view, but they are perfectly serviceable.

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New in Aperture 3 is the full screen Browser, which presents your folders and projects in a more appealing manner. It is invoked by tapping **F** from the Browser view.

- p0175 A toolbar running across the top of the interface lets you perform rudimentary edits, such as Red-Eye Correction, Cropping, Straightening and Rating, as well as opening up the Loupe. Below this are the Browser navigation tabs. The backward-facing Projects button takes you back to the projects overview, which presents your images in Stacks organized by project. To the right of this is a breadcrumb trail that lets you skip straight to a specific folder, project or album without having to work your way back up and then down the directory tree.
- p0180 Double-clicking an image in the full screen Browser opens it for editing. Double-clicking again on the opened image returns you to the Browser.

## s0040 Toolbar

- p0185 The toolbar runs across the top of the Aperture interface, just as it does in Word, Excel, Finder windows in Mac OS X and in most mainstream applications. Its importance has been greatly reduced over successive updates to Aperture, for while it was once used to open and close panels, rotate, crop and straighten images, fix red-eye and apply selective patches to your work, it has benefited from a radical slimming down and now focuses on core features (Fig. 2.7). In Aperture 3 it has been redesigned, with more friendly icons and new one-click publishing to social networks like Facebook and Flickr.



FIG. 2.7 The toolbar runs across the top of the Aperture interface, just as it does in most applications, and is home to some of the application's most commonly used functions, including project creation, and calling up the Loupe.

- p0190 The first icon on the toolbar – Inspector – hides and shows the combined Library, Metadata and Adjustments panel on the left of the interface. It has the same function as the keyboard shortcut *I*. The blue arrow to the right of this opens the Import tool to add photos to your library. Technically you could do the same by inserting a media card into an attached reader or connecting a camera (assuming you have Mac OS X set to treat Aperture as the default application for handling incoming photos), but by manually invoking the Import tool you can also add images from internal or external drives and network stores.

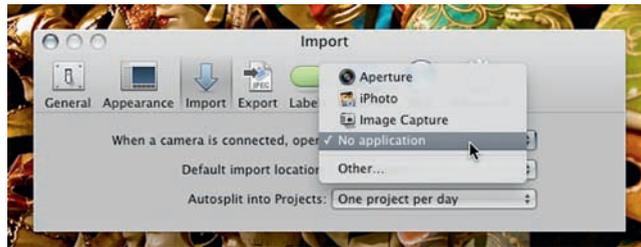
### Controlling Image Imports

If you would rather not have Aperture pop up every time you insert a memory card, perhaps because you'd rather store your images in iPhoto or save them directly to a backed-up network drive, its auto appearance

can be disabled in the operating system. It will then be up to you to manually invoke the Import command in whichever application you choose.

To disable Aperture's automatic appearance, or activate it if iPhoto or another application appears each time you insert a card or connect a camera, open Aperture's Preferences (**⌘,**) and click on the Import tab. Here, change the drop-down menu beside the line 'When camera is connected, open:' to either Aperture, 'No application' or an alternative piece of software, as appropriate (Fig. 2.8).

**FIG. 2.8** Control what happens when you plug in a camera or insert a card into a media reader by specifying whether Aperture, an alternative or no application at all should launch.



The New button is used for creating Projects, Folders, Albums, Smart Albums and either printed or online products, such as books and journals. The relative importance of the Projects, Folders, Albums and Smart Albums is clear from the fact that they have keyboard equivalents (**⌘ N**, **Shift ⌘ N**, **⌘ L** and **Shift ⌘ L** respectively), whereas the others do not. Why? Because they are used for organizing your images and so relate to everything you do. The others are creation actions, and so will apply to only a selection of images. As ever, it's worth getting familiar with these shortcuts as they are excellent timesavers.

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Equally useful are the shortcuts that duplicate the toolbar's View and Full screen buttons: **V** cycles through the three options in the View menu, switching between Browser Only (just your thumbnails or file list), Viewer Only (just the selected image) and a mixture of the two. To devote the whole of your screen to your images or the Browser, tap **F** or click the toolbar's Full screen button. This fades away the Aperture interface and switches to a black background, allowing you to focus all of your attention on the image or images in hand (Fig. 2.9).

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Some parts of the toolbar are merely reorganized: the Keywords button, for example, brings up the keywords HUD, allowing you to assign tags to your images, and has simply been moved from the opposite end of the toolbar. However, there are also a number of new buttons on the toolbar in