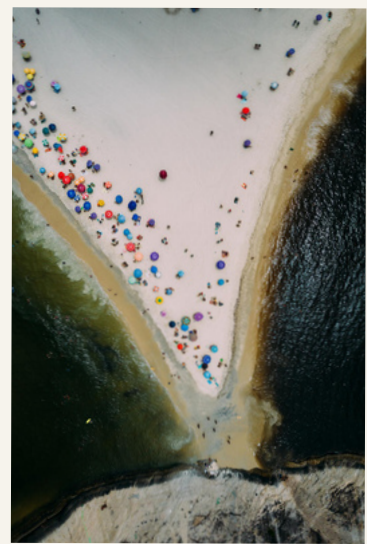
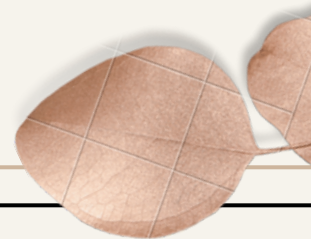


*Let's Get Started*

# FIVE BRUTALLY HONEST TIPS TO ACHIEVE BOOK COVER PHOTOGRAPHY SUCCESS

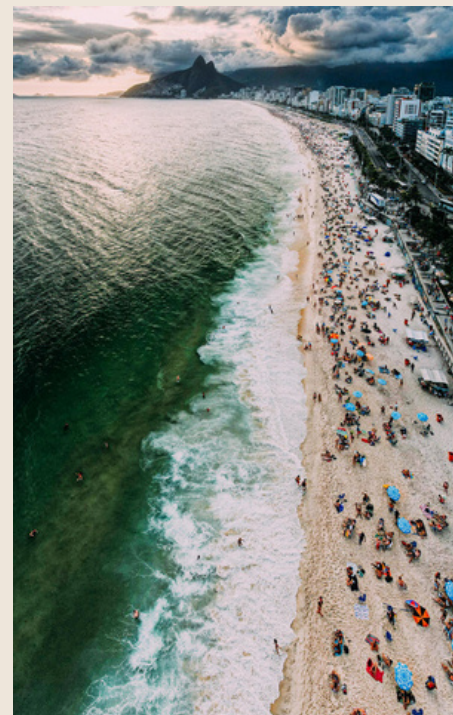
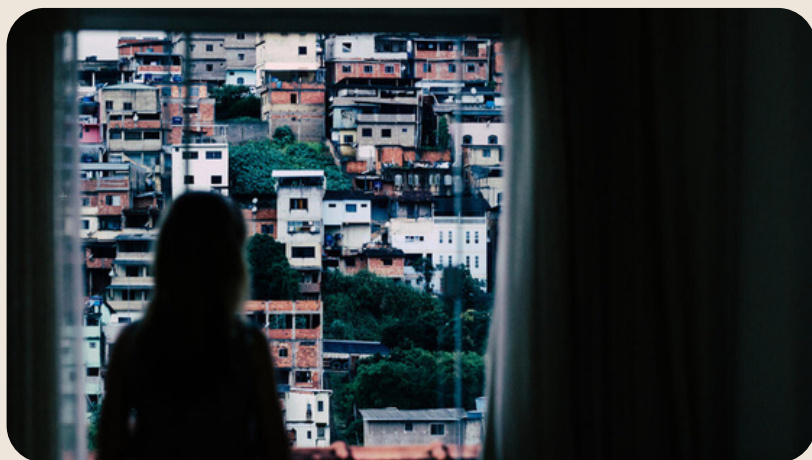
LEARN HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL BOOK COVER  
CONTRIBUTOR AT [ARCANGEL IMAGES](#)





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# DEAR CREATIVE PERSON,

I'm excited that you've downloaded a copy of this Brutally Honest Tips to Achieve Book Cover Photography Success at Arcangel. Now a little about me.

I'm a Travel Photographer who has been uploading exclusive book covers regularly to Arcangel since 2017. My portfolio consists of 2,200 exclusive Rights-Managed images and I'm honoured to have licensed, via Arcangel, a total of 23 book covers to date - see next page for some examples from the past year.

I write regularly about my book cover experiences in my Brutally Honest Stock Blog, in addition to writing about licensing to microstock agencies and stock footage.

After reading and hopefully re-reading this guide many times (so the info sticks), if you feel that the information has been useful to your own business, I kindly ask you to [buy me a cup of coffee as a token of your appreciation](#). Also, I would love to hear from you so do get in touch, would be happy to answer any questions, or if have suggestions or just to say hello!

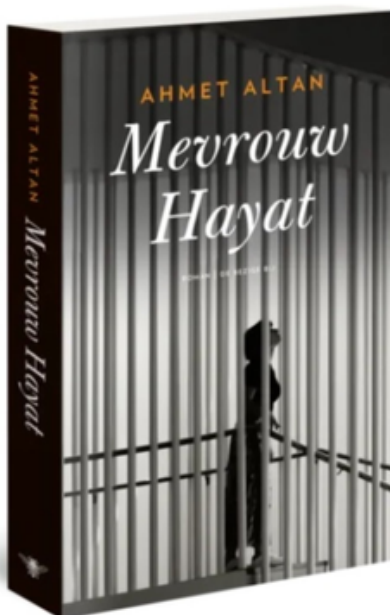
- Alex

**Disclaimer: This is 100% an independent guide and I have in no way been instructed by Arcangel or another Party to draft this or have I received any remuneration for its creation and subsequent publication**

LET'S GET STARTED!!

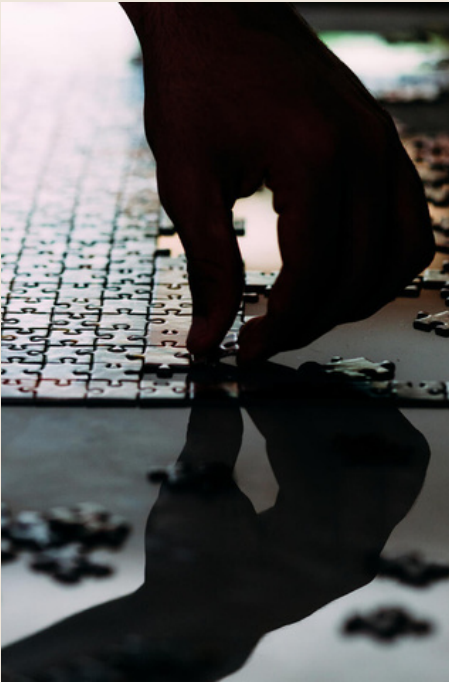


# Some book covers licensed during the past year





# GETTING ACCEPTED AT ARCANGEL



Who are Arcangel and how to do you get in?

Arcangel specialise in licensing highly creative yet commercially relevant photography and Illustration to a worldwide client base. Established in 2004 and considered the number one supplier of images to the international Book publishing Industry, thousands of their images are used on book covers every year.

At the core of their operation is professionalism, creativity, respect and honest business practices, both with their clients and contributors.



The first step is to curate a strong batch of 20 potential exclusive book covers to be assessed by Arcangel's curation team.

Few contributors are accepted at first try (or ever), so don't be disheartened if you don't meet the criteria. Read carefully this guide before applying to improve your chances.

[Click here to find out more about their strict selection process](#)



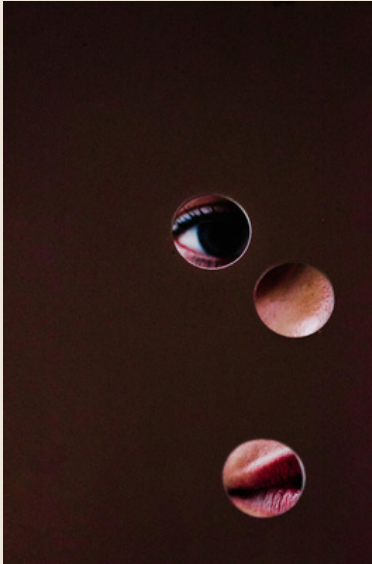
# TIP 1: INVESTING IN THE RIGHT GEAR

- Investing in a full-frame sensor (or equivalent) is the best way to go to ensure you'll have more than enough megapixels to work with, particularly if your image needs cropping. Note that Arcangel have a minimum requirement of 4800px on the longest side (regardless whether the image is horizontal or vertical), although the more pixels the better;
- Invest in quality lenses to ensure that focus is tack sharp on the subject and noise is low. Prime lenses work best, ideally with large aperture (<F2.8). Also a tilt-shift lens can add to the creative process to produce unique results;
- If you're planning to submit aerial photos, invest in a quality drone with a larger sensor, ideally at least one inch. Follow the rules and get licensed and the obtain proper authorizations/permits to avoid legal issues - more on aerals in this guide;
- Ensure you have both Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop installed, or equivalent; and
- Investing in a large & calibrated monitor is a life-saver to conduct cosmetic post-processing. You'll often need to be zooming in around 100% to inspect your images.



# TIP 2: THINKING LIKE A DESIGNER

2.1 Ensure that your images have ample copy space - designers will thank you! Bonus tip: Test out some designs on Canva which is free to use

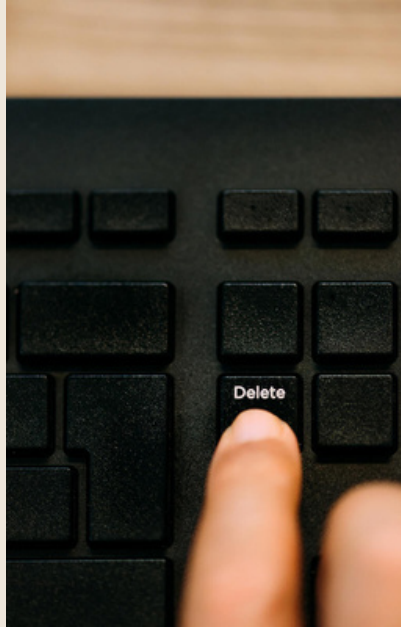


2.2 Understand the dimensions of a physical book, particularly if you wish to submit horizontal images which wrap around the front cover, spine and back cover

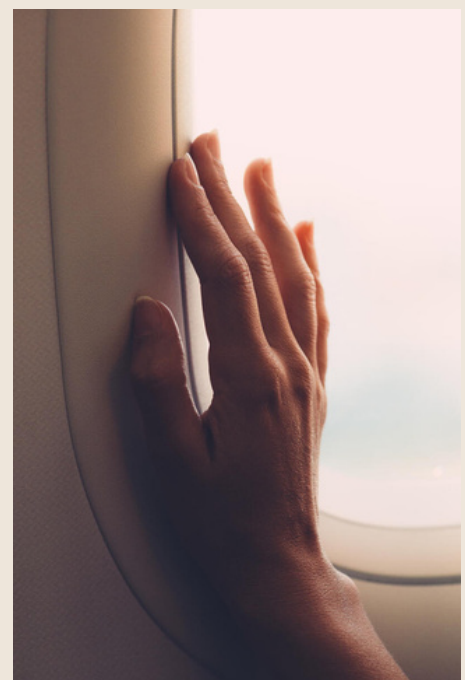
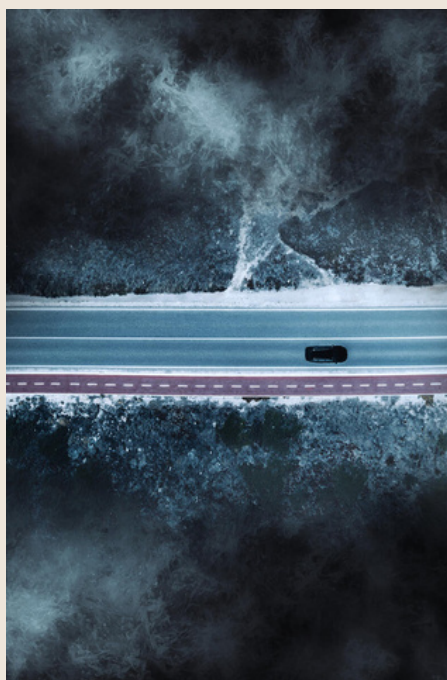




2.3 Simplify your message with one clear subject that would fit into a potential storyline, such as: thriller, crime, romance, historical, horror, etc.



2.4 Think and research colour palettes to invoke certain emotions that fit into the story. Tones of "Red", in particular are a popular book cover "colour" that stands out which can be used to reinforce themes related to: "danger, passion, rage, etc"





## 2.5 DO YOUR MARKET RESEARCH!

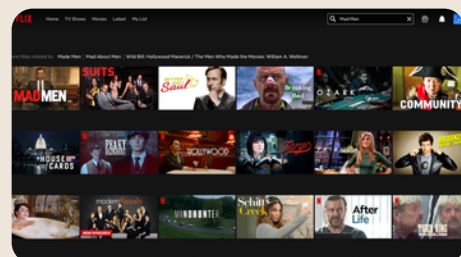
See what's out there in your local book shop for ideas and inspiration and during your travels



Likewise, visit the online book shops and search for the latest releases and best-sellers



Bonus tip: Netflix produces some stunning covers that are worth analysing in detail for ideas, also check out HBO and Amazon Prime covers



# TIP 3: LEARN FROM REJECTIONS

Assuming that you're accepted, you'll receive a huge amount of rejections on most of your initial batches, that's because AC Curators are picky and I'm super glad that they are since:

- Arcangel licenses are at **least 100 times**, on average, that of a microstock license. So, those images should be 100 times "better" to justify this premium
- How many and often you'll receive rejections depends on a number of factors, including their technical merits, commercial relevance and similar batches

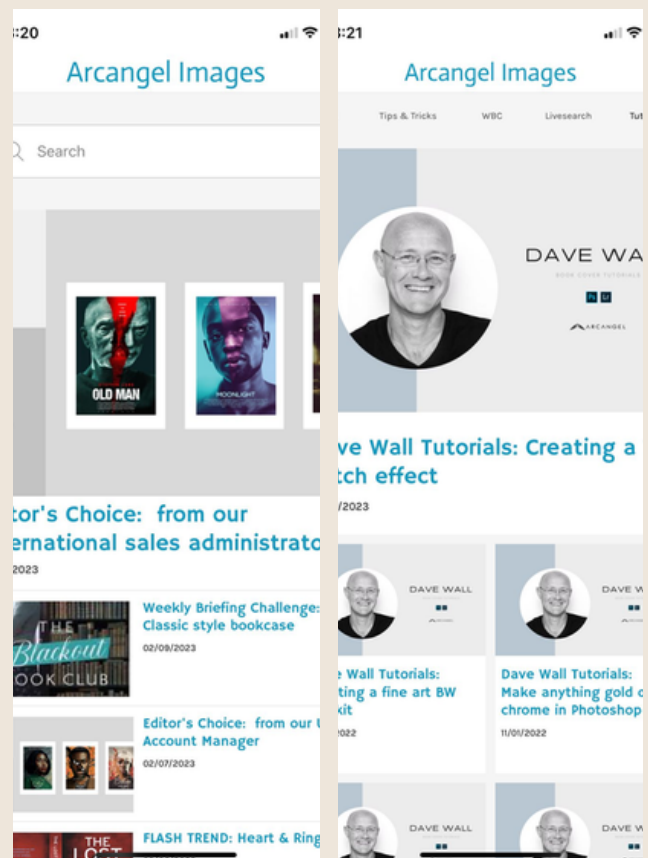
|          |      |
|----------|------|
| Rejected | 8443 |
| Public   | 2160 |

<----- That's right, historically my acceptance rate is only at 26% but this also means that I've received a lot of feedback to improve!

## Arcangel App

ONCE ACCEPTED, HIGHLY RECOMMEND TO CHECK OUT ARCANGEL'S FREE APP WHICH INCLUDES TUTORIALS TO ENSURE THAT YOU'RE ALWAYS IMPROVING YOUR CRAFT

NOTE: THIS APP IS ONLY AVAILABLE TO ACCEPTED CONTRIBUTORS, SO ANOTHER INCENTIVE TO KEEP TRYING TO GET IN!





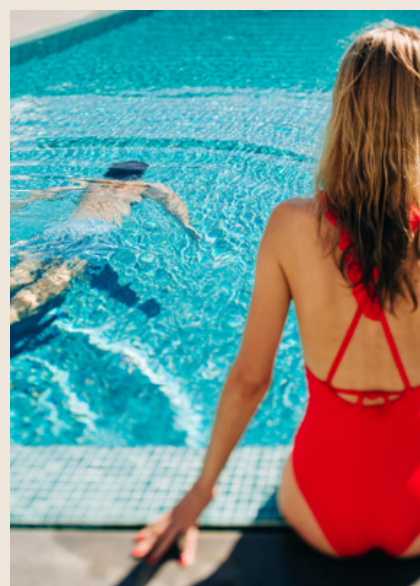
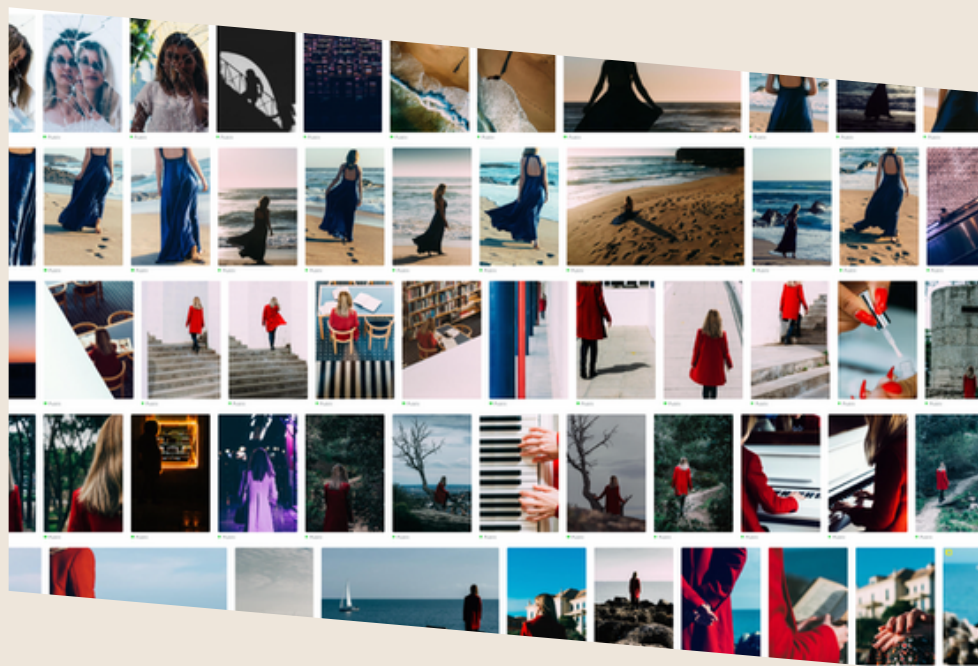


## TIP 4: FINDING A NICHE

Finding your niche as a beginner book cover artist is challenging. Hopefully I'll be able to offer some ideas discussing my own experiences.

Coming from a microstock background (since 2012), as a generalist travel photographer, I had no idea just how difficult it was to make the transition. Around 2019, I was receiving upwards of 95% rejections on some batches. Plus, it didn't help my cause that most of my submissions were horizontal, which is less than ideal save for exceptional scenes that can wrap around the front-spine-back of the book. In addition, those travel shots lacked the crucial narrative/storytelling ingredient.

Only until around 2021 did I slowly begin to make progress on improving the quality of my submissions with the feedback I was getting from rejections and my own research. I also decided to transition to shooting more model-released content as I began dating an attractive slim young woman which kindly volunteered to be a book cover model armed with a positive attitude and red garments!





## BUT YOU DON'T LIKE SHOOTING MODELS!

Neither do I, at least traditionally, but it's something that I've had to adapt to fit into what the market needs. After all, most stories feature at least one female protagonist. Add an interesting male into the frame and you've got yourself the potential for a great story. Then comes considerations about clothes, make-up, expressions, body language, framing, etc. which are beyond the scope of this guide, so do your research.

### Shoot yourself!

If you can't find a suitable model, maybe you can pull out a tripod and shoot yourself if you have the "right look", I've experimented a few times such as my bare-chested shower scene under Tip-2 lol

### Getting high!

A potential niche to explore is aerial photography with a drone. I got the drone bug in early 2022 and have been shooting regularly since. These submissions have yielded a high acceptance rate, particularly of the "birds eye view top down shots".

Drone photography carries a certain amount of risk, so make sure to follow the rules and remember that drones and salt water don't mix, at least I've been advised but have no plans to find out for myself! :-)







## BUT YOU'RE SCARED OF HEIGHTS!

Look, I'm trying my best here and you keep rejecting my niche suggestions! So, what's left? Here's also another few suggestions of niches that Arcangel contributors are having success:

- You're an avid collector of antiques and enjoy shooting still life;
- You have an old collection of old images from your grandparents in your basement and some may be scanned to be book covers;
- You're a Photoshop guru and love creating weird and wonderful composites (great, as long as they're not AI which aren't accepted) and/or futuristic artwork;
- You love the sea and can get some cool underwater shots with a high-resolution camera;
- You're an illustrator!



# TIP 5: BE PATIENT!



## YOU PROBABLY WON'T EVER GET SALES

You know why? Because you'll probably quit! You won't ever know just how close you were to getting your first book cover sale, followed by many more. If only you stayed the course.



## TOOK ME 2 YEARS AND 500 ACCEPTED IMAGES BEFORE MY FIRST SALE

Glad I stayed the course, now I've had 23 and I'm improving my submissions everyday so I'm confident I'll have many more in the next few years, but I'm more focused on regularly uploading to be honest!



## TRY TO ENJOY AND TRUST THE PROCESS

The trick for me to staying motivated is to:

- Upload regularly and receive rejections
- Learn from rejections and upload some more
- Watch tutorials on their App and combine it with your own market research within your niche
- Bonus tip: The more you upload the more the reviewers will get to know your style and may reach out to you get offer personalised tips



## MAKE REALISTIC GOALS

Working backwards, supposing your goal is to have **500 images accepted** at the end of Y1. Therefore, you'll probably need to upload at least 2,000 images (160 images/month or 40/week).

Bonus tip: Don't expect sales for at least your first two years. Avoid making monetary goals as they're out of your direct control as a contributor. Trust the AC team to diligently work with their clients.



# YOU MAKE YOUR OWN LUCK

So cool that you've made it this far and thanks for reading.

So, I really wish you the best of luck in your book cover journey but honestly, it has nothing to do with luck.

We have an unprecedented abundance of resources to work with these days to continuously improve our craft but what is in short supply is probably the most important **Tip 5: PATIENCE**. Probably a sign of the times so you'll need to be disciplined.

Arcangel are a premium agency in the book cover sector and wish you success to be part of this growing community of talented creatives.

Again, if you've found this information useful please show your appreciation and buy me a coffee :-)

In addition, I would love to hear from you, so drop me a line:  
arotenberg@brutallyhonestmicrostock  
[brutallyhonestmicrostock.com](https://brutallyhonestmicrostock.com)

