

# Get Started with darktable

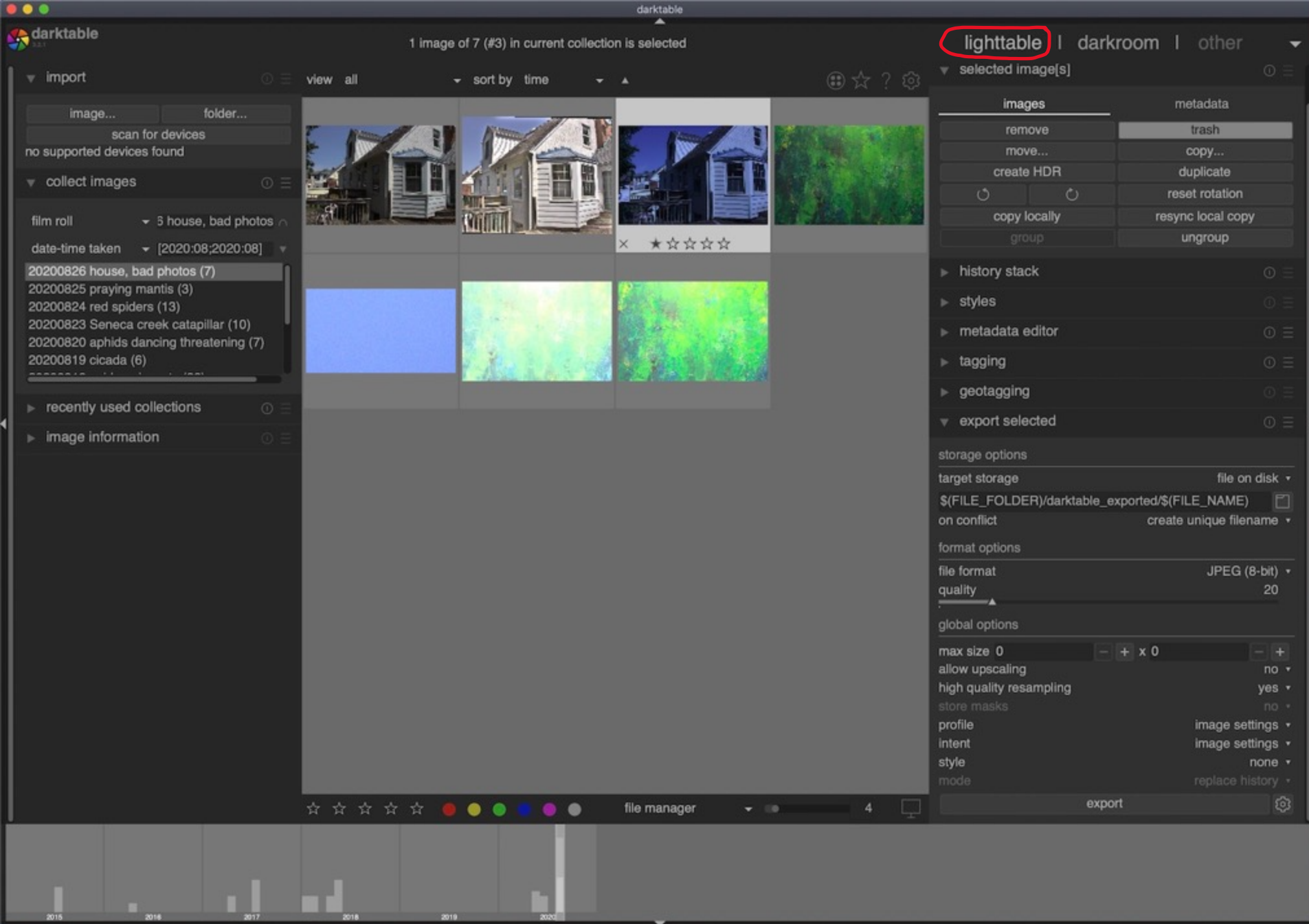


darktable is a powerful, free open software alternative to Light Room

Tanya Riseman, 2020

# Getting Started with darktable

- Basic layout
- Modules in darktable that are equivalent to Light Room
- Some advanced modules and options in darktable but not in Light Room

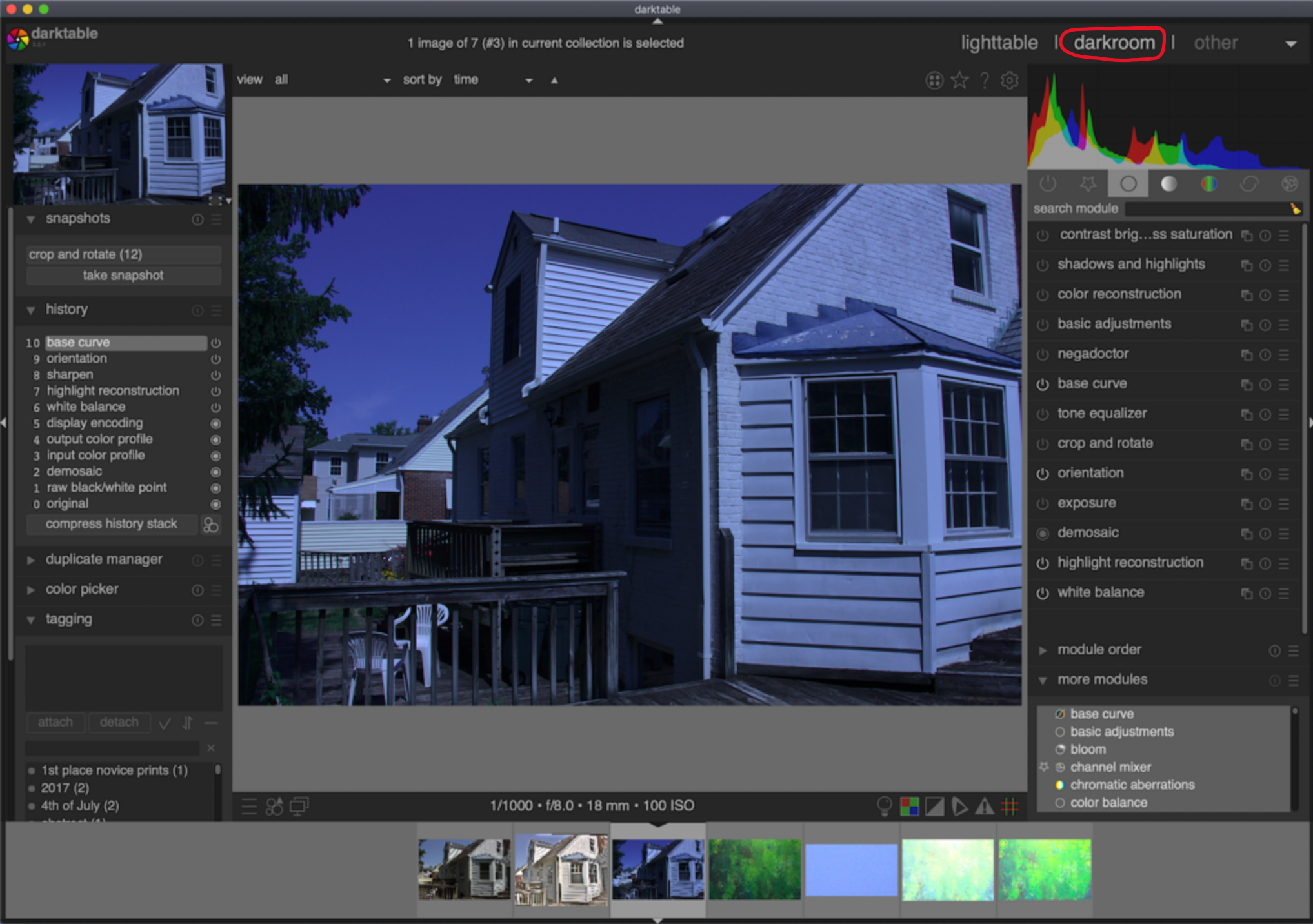


lighttable is like Library in Light Room.

darktable will make sidecar <filename>.<raw>.xmp. No conflict with LR files.

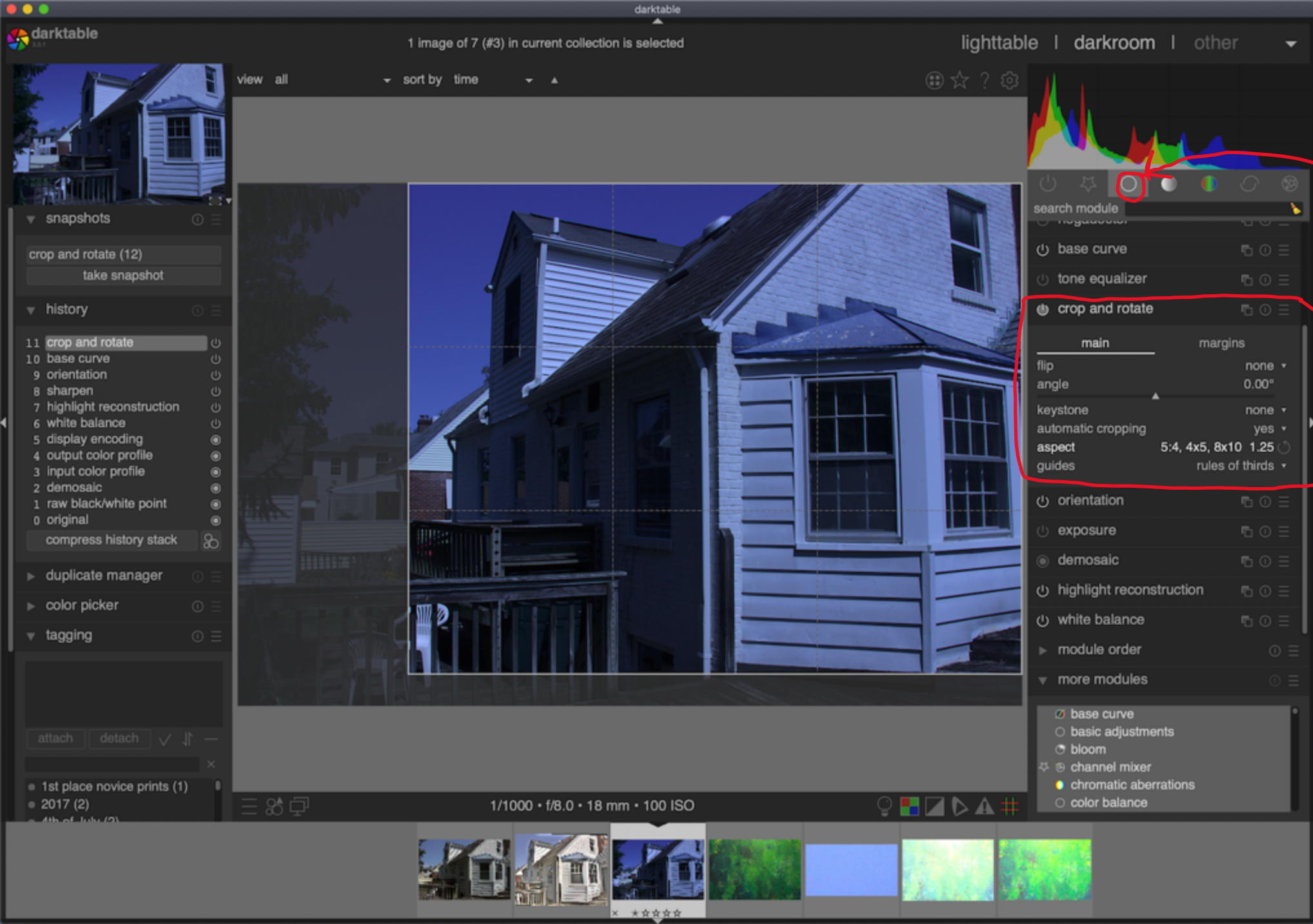
Simple LR edits are transferred to darktable if LR sidecar file is available.

feature	Light Room	darktable
<b>Image/file management</b>	Library	lighttable
file and directory management	yes	<b>no (use Image Capture)</b>
ratings/keywords/hierarchical keywords/filters	yes	yes
collections	yes	<b>no</b>



darkroom is like Develop in Light Room.

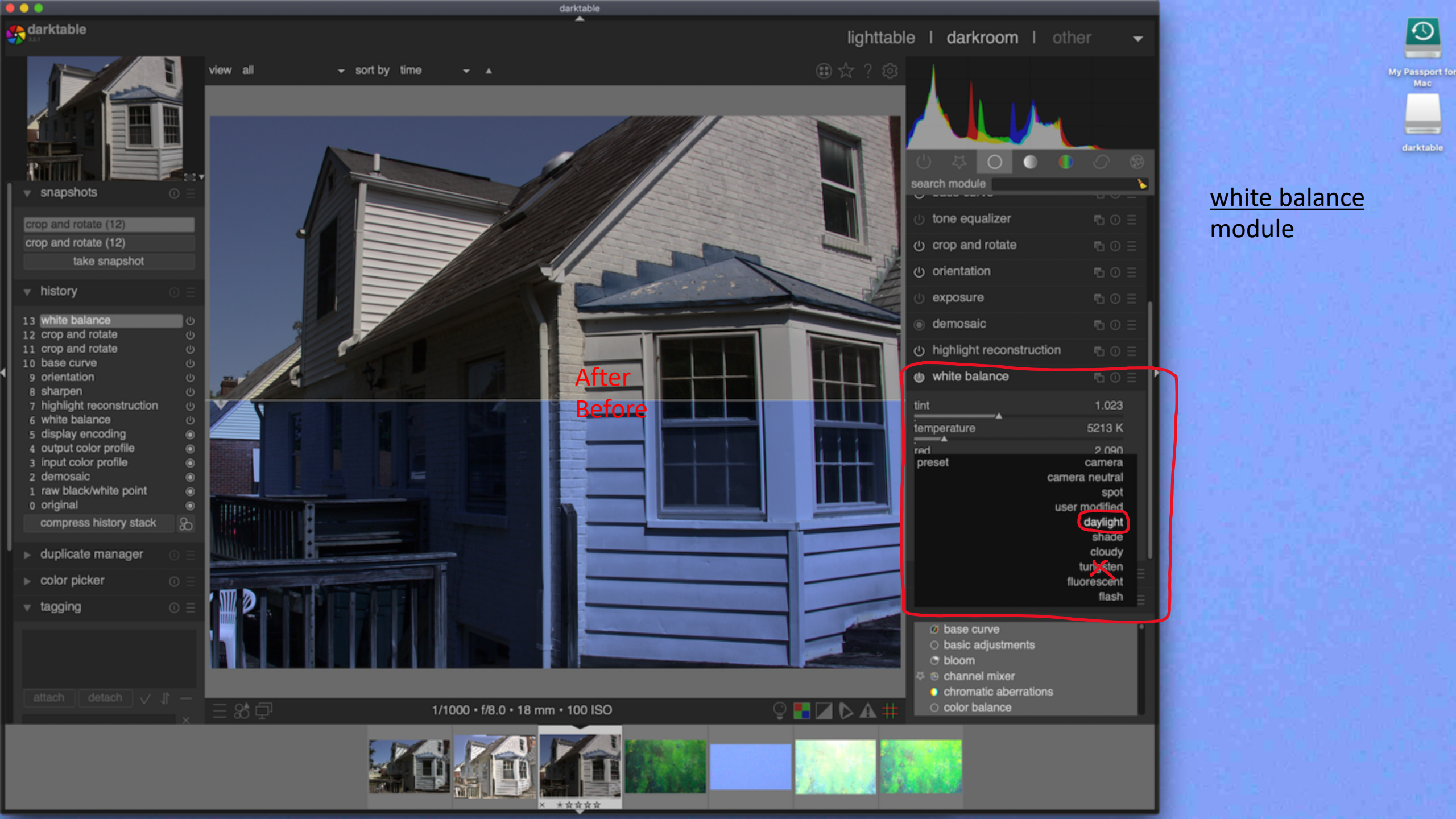
feature	Light Room	darktable
<b>Editing images</b>	Develop	darkroom
non-destructive editing	yes	yes
quickie filters and special effects (like on cell phones)	no	no
global changes (exposure, highlights/shadows, color, etc.)	yes	yes
brush/shapes/etc. masks for local changes	yes	yes (more choices)
adjustment brush with auto mask in LR and camera raw	yes (awesome)	<b>sort of</b>
advanced selection of algorithms	<b>no</b>	yes (lots of choices)
layers	no	no



Collection of basic modules

crop and rotate module





snapshots

- crop and rotate (12)
- crop and rotate (12)
- take snapshot

history

- 13 white balance
- 12 crop and rotate
- 11 crop and rotate
- 10 base curve
- 9 orientation
- 8 sharpen
- 7 highlight reconstruction
- 6 white balance
- 5 display encoding
- 4 output color profile
- 3 input color profile
- 2 demosaic
- 1 raw black/white point
- 0 original

compress history stack

duplicate manager

color picker

tagging

attach detach



After  
Before



search module

- tone equalizer
- crop and rotate
- orientation
- exposure
- demosaic
- highlight reconstruction

white balance

tint 1.023

temperature 5213 K

red 2.090

preset

- camera
- camera neutral
- spot
- user modified
- daylight**
- shade
- cloudy
- tungsten
- fluorescent
- flash

- base curve
- basic adjustments
- bloom
- channel mixer
- chromatic aberrations
- color balance

white balance  
module

1/1000 · f/8.0 · 18 mm · 100 ISO





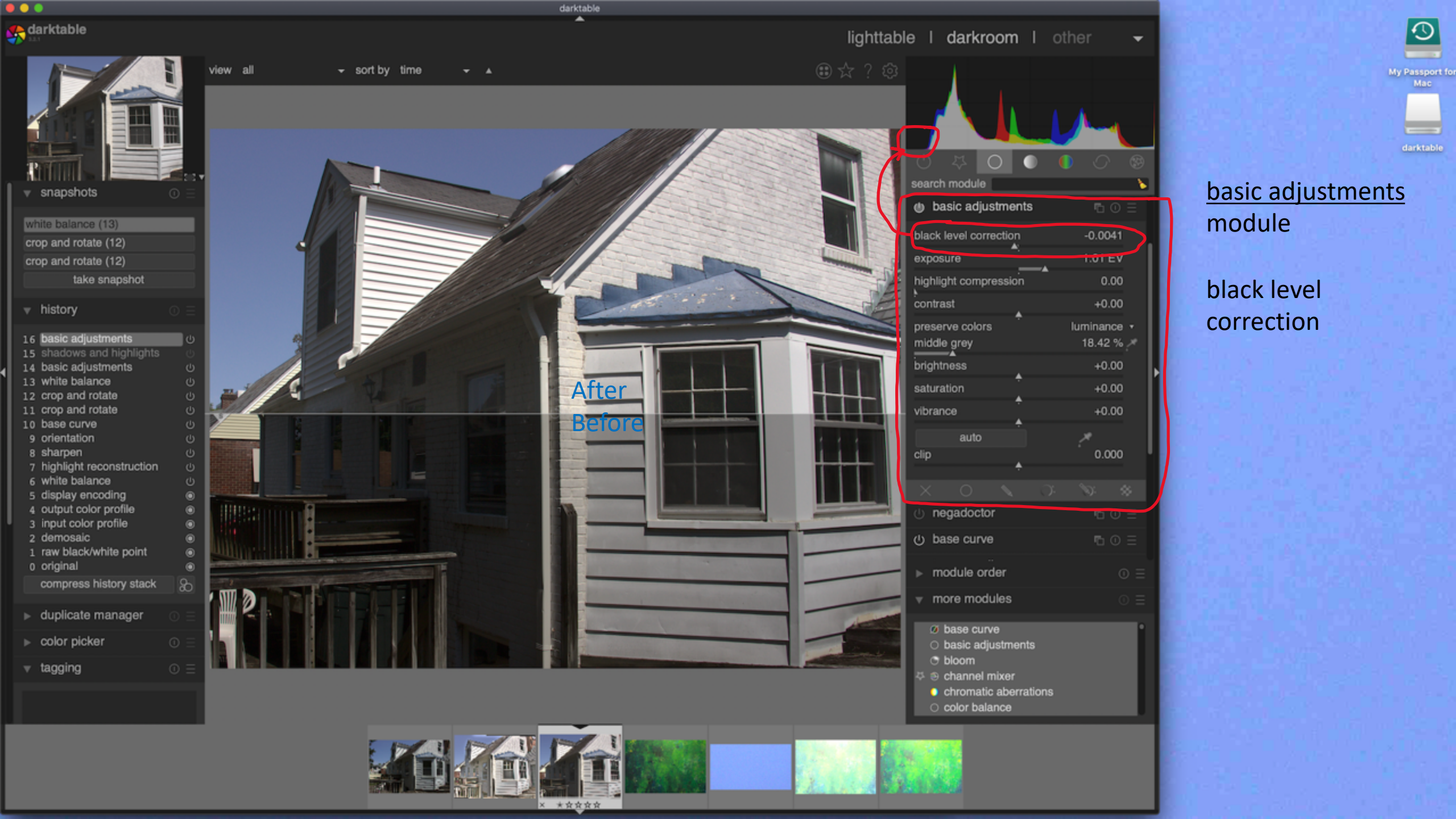


basic adjustments  
module

Exposure

Masks available in most modules, when they make sense.

Opposite to Light Room's approach of masks only available in Adjustment Brush, which pragmatically limits the number of sliders possible.



lighttable | darkroom | other

view all sort by time

snapshots

- white balance (13)
- crop and rotate (12)
- crop and rotate (12)
- take snapshot

history

- 16 basic adjustments
- 15 shadows and highlights
- 14 basic adjustments
- 13 white balance
- 12 crop and rotate
- 11 crop and rotate
- 10 base curve
- 9 orientation
- 8 sharpen
- 7 highlight reconstruction
- 6 white balance
- 5 display encoding
- 4 output color profile
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- duplicate manager
- color picker
- tagging

After  
Before



search module

**basic adjustments**

- black level correction -0.0041
- exposure 1.01 EV
- highlight compression 0.00
- contrast +0.00
- preserve colors luminance
- middle grey 18.42 %
- brightness +0.00
- saturation +0.00
- vibrance +0.00
- clip 0.000

negadoctor

base curve

module order

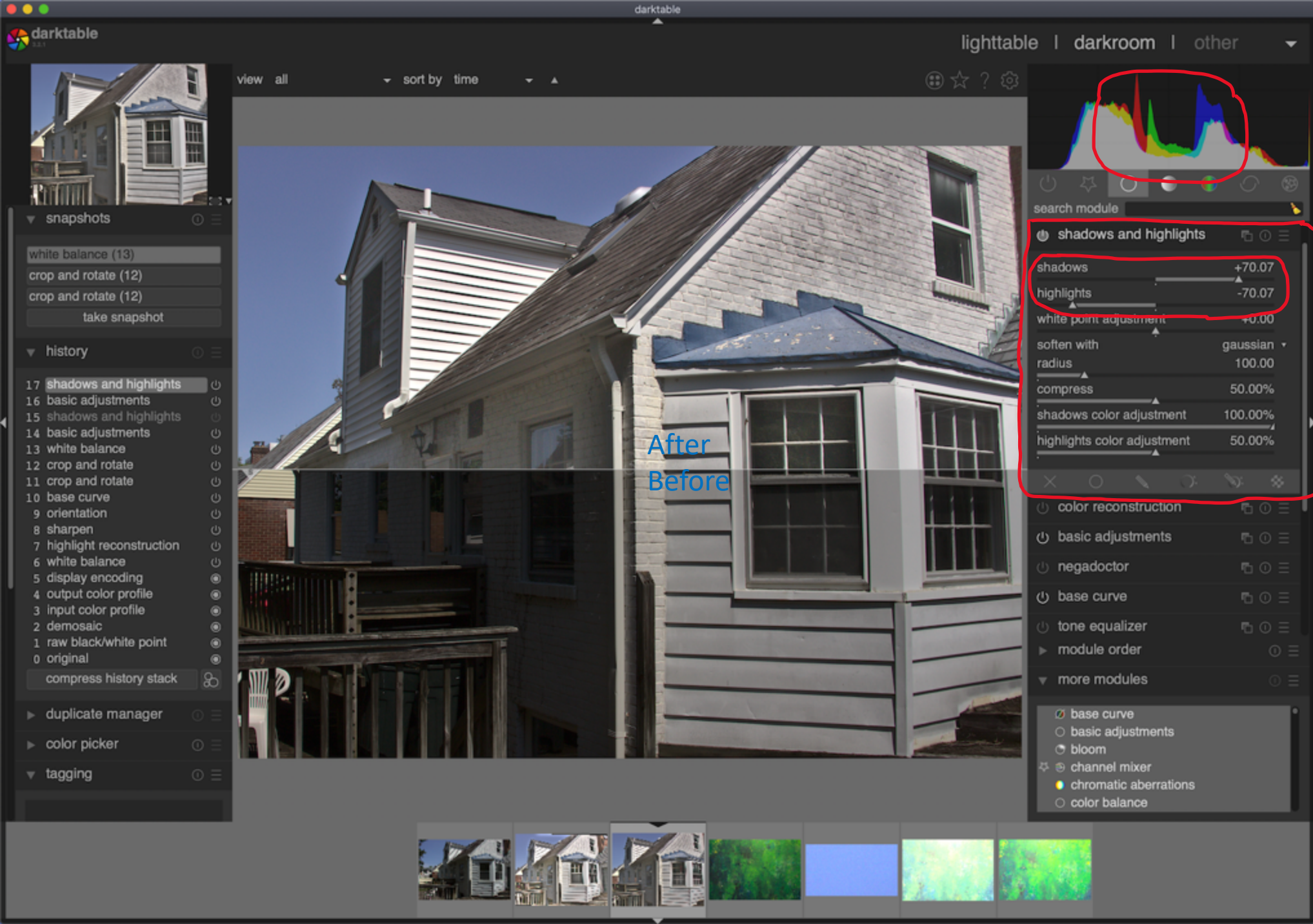
more modules

- base curve
- basic adjustments
- bloom
- channel mixer
- chromatic aberrations
- color balance

basic adjustments  
module

black level  
correction

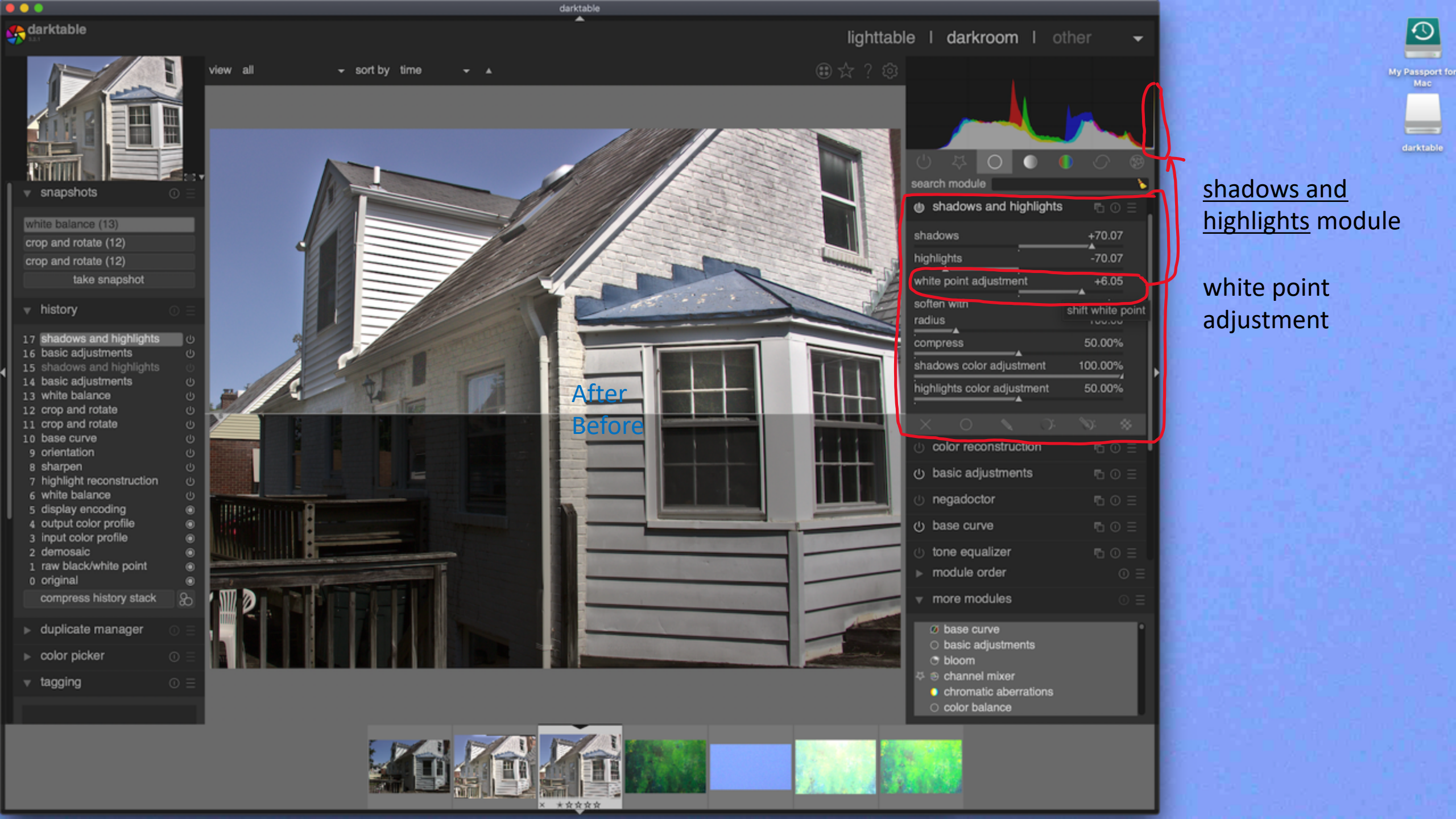




shadows and highlights module

shadows

highlights



lighttable | darkroom | other

view all

sort by time

snapshots

white balance (13)

crop and rotate (12)

crop and rotate (12)

take snapshot

history

17 shadows and highlights

16 basic adjustments

15 shadows and highlights

14 basic adjustments

13 white balance

12 crop and rotate

11 crop and rotate

10 base curve

9 orientation

8 sharpen

7 highlight reconstruction

6 white balance

5 display encoding

4 output color profile

3 input color profile

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1 raw black/white point

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compress history stack

duplicate manager

color picker

tagging

After  
Before

search module

shadows and highlights

shadows +70.07

highlights -70.07

white point adjustment +6.05

soften with radius shift white point

compress 50.00%

shadows color adjustment 100.00%

highlights color adjustment 50.00%

color reconstruction

basic adjustments

negadoctor

base curve

tone equalizer

module order

more modules

base curve

basic adjustments

bloom

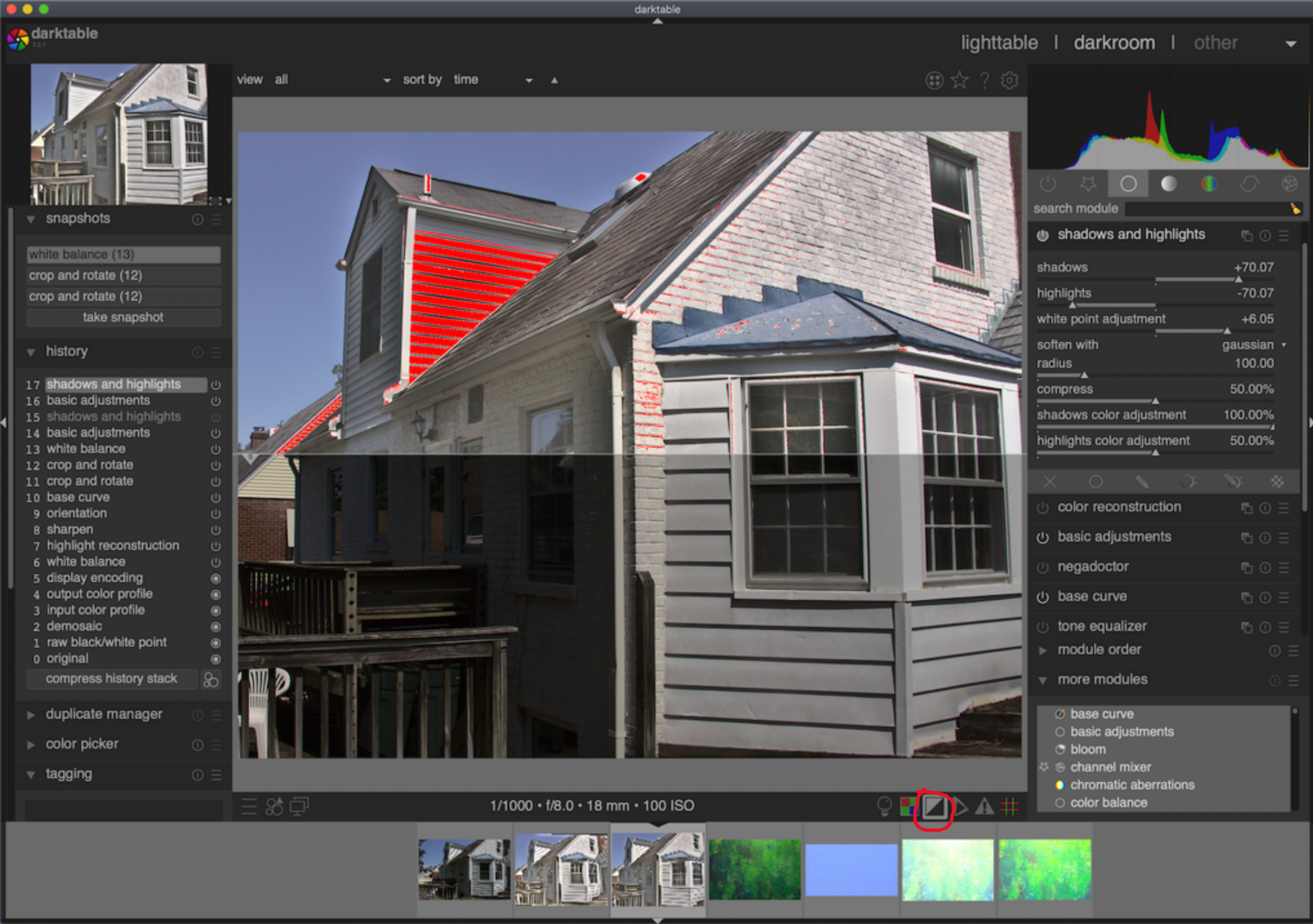
channel mixer

chromatic aberrations

color balance

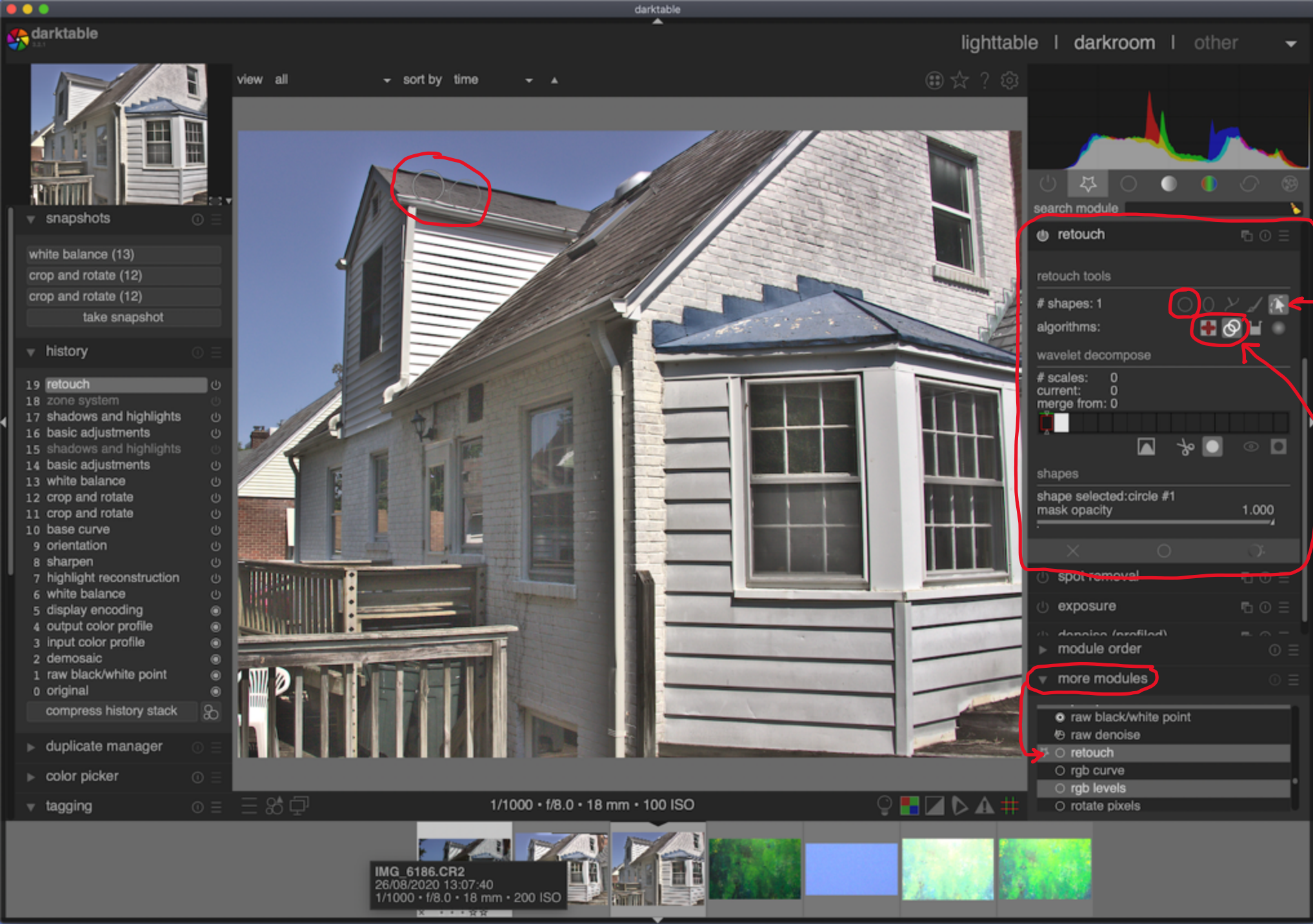
shadows and highlights module

white point adjustment



Toggle  
under (blue) and  
over (red)  
exposure





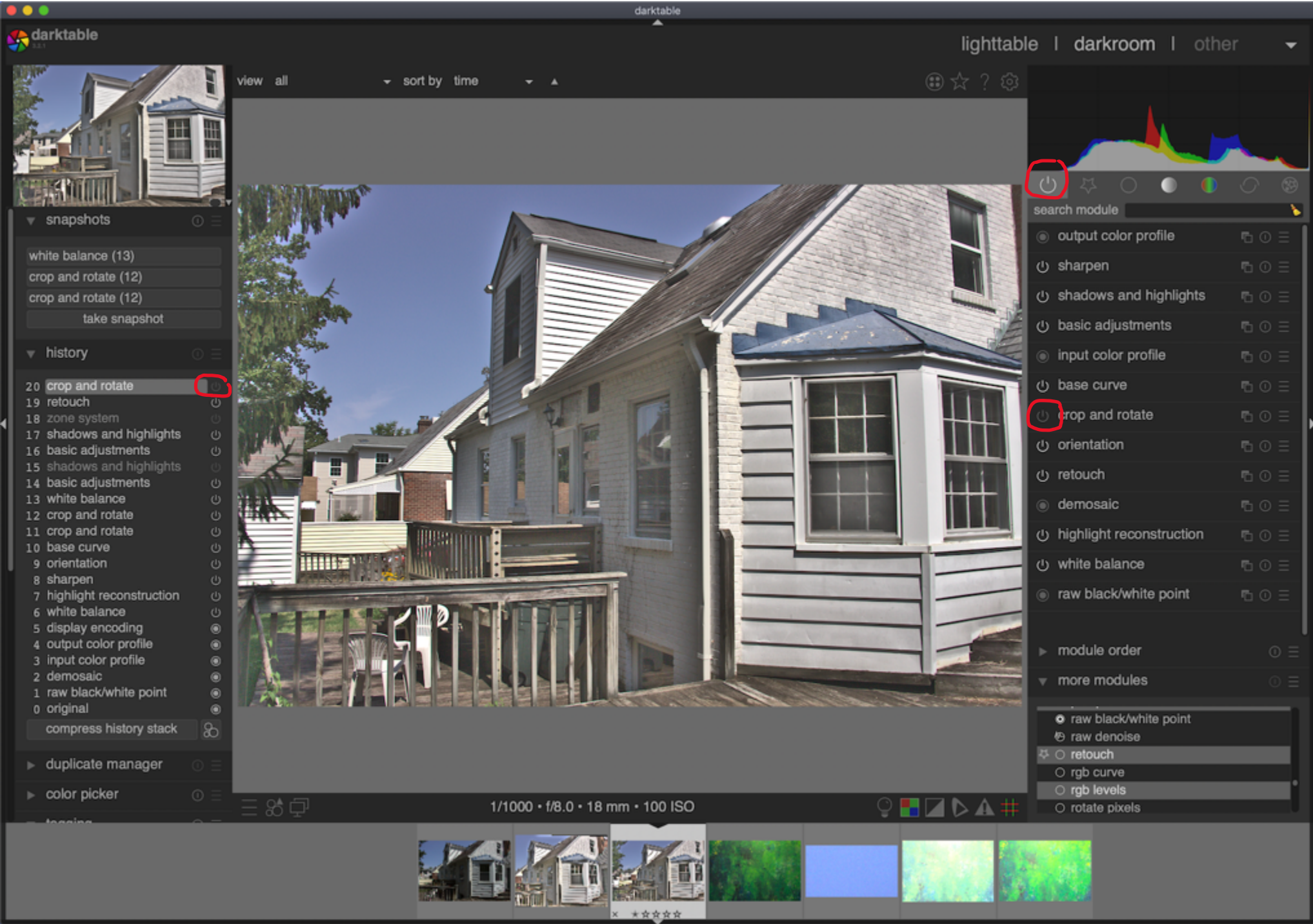
retouch module is like spot removal in Light Room.

Choice of shapes or brush, with feathering.

Heal or clone.

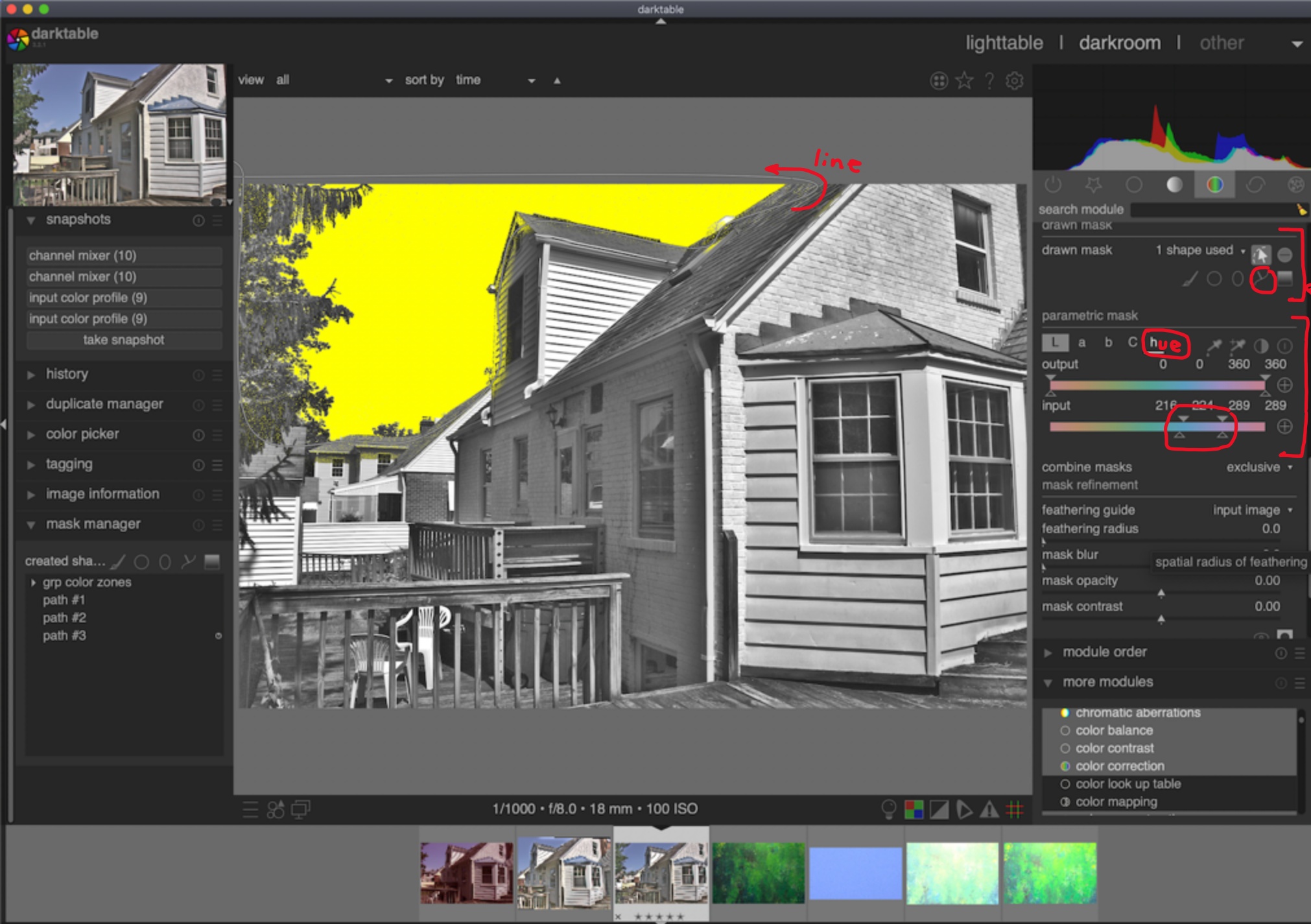


IMG\_6186.CR2  
26/08/2020 13:07:40  
1/1000 · f/8.0 · 18 mm · 200 ISO



Can turn off any module(s) to see what difference they make.

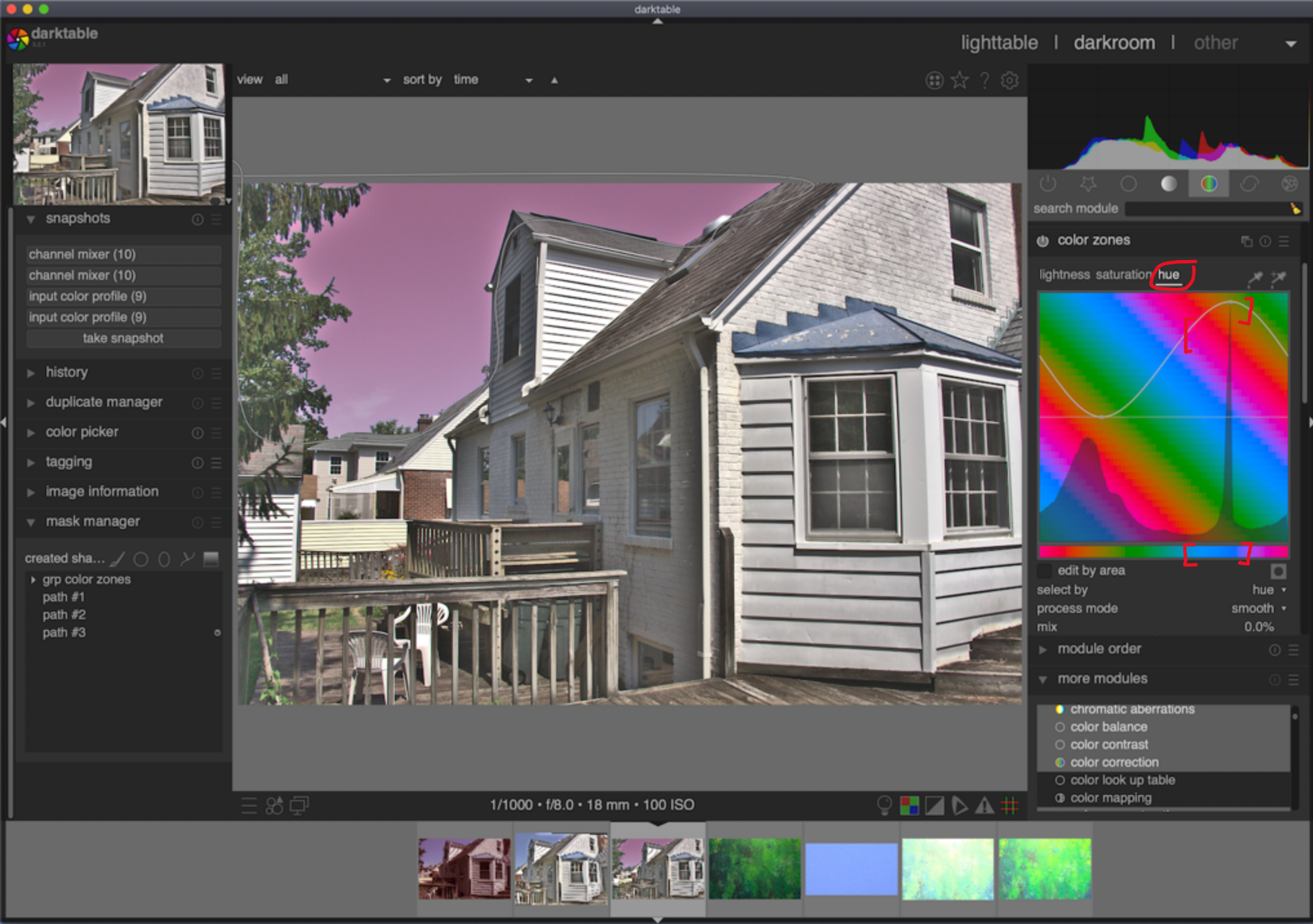
Here, crop and rotate is turned off.



Module color zones and many other modules contain **“drawn mask”** (white line) and **“parametric mask”** (select limited range of hue or luminance, etc.)

Can be used both at the same time.

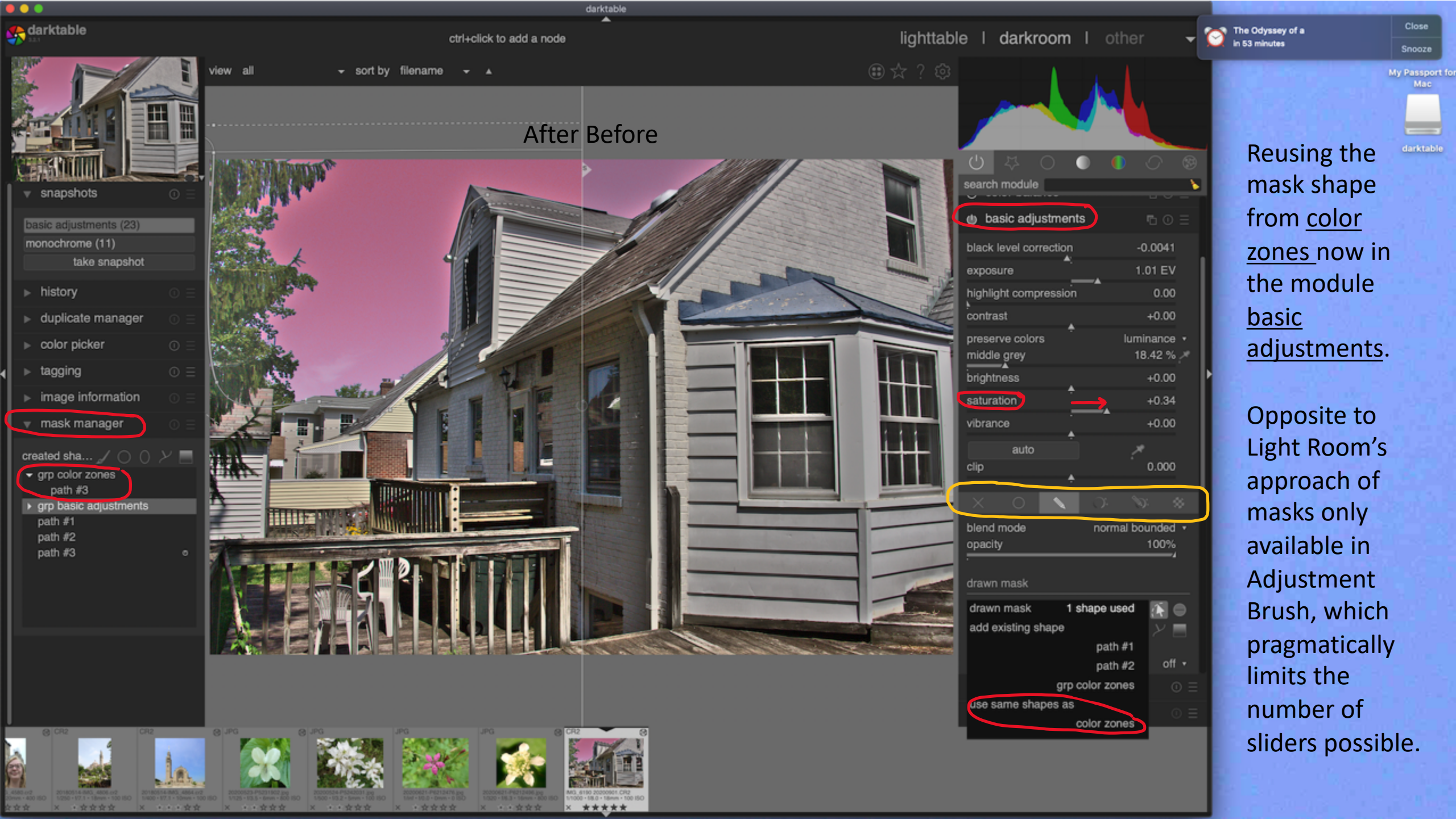




After masking, select new color purple for the sky using module color zones.

← Straight line is no change.

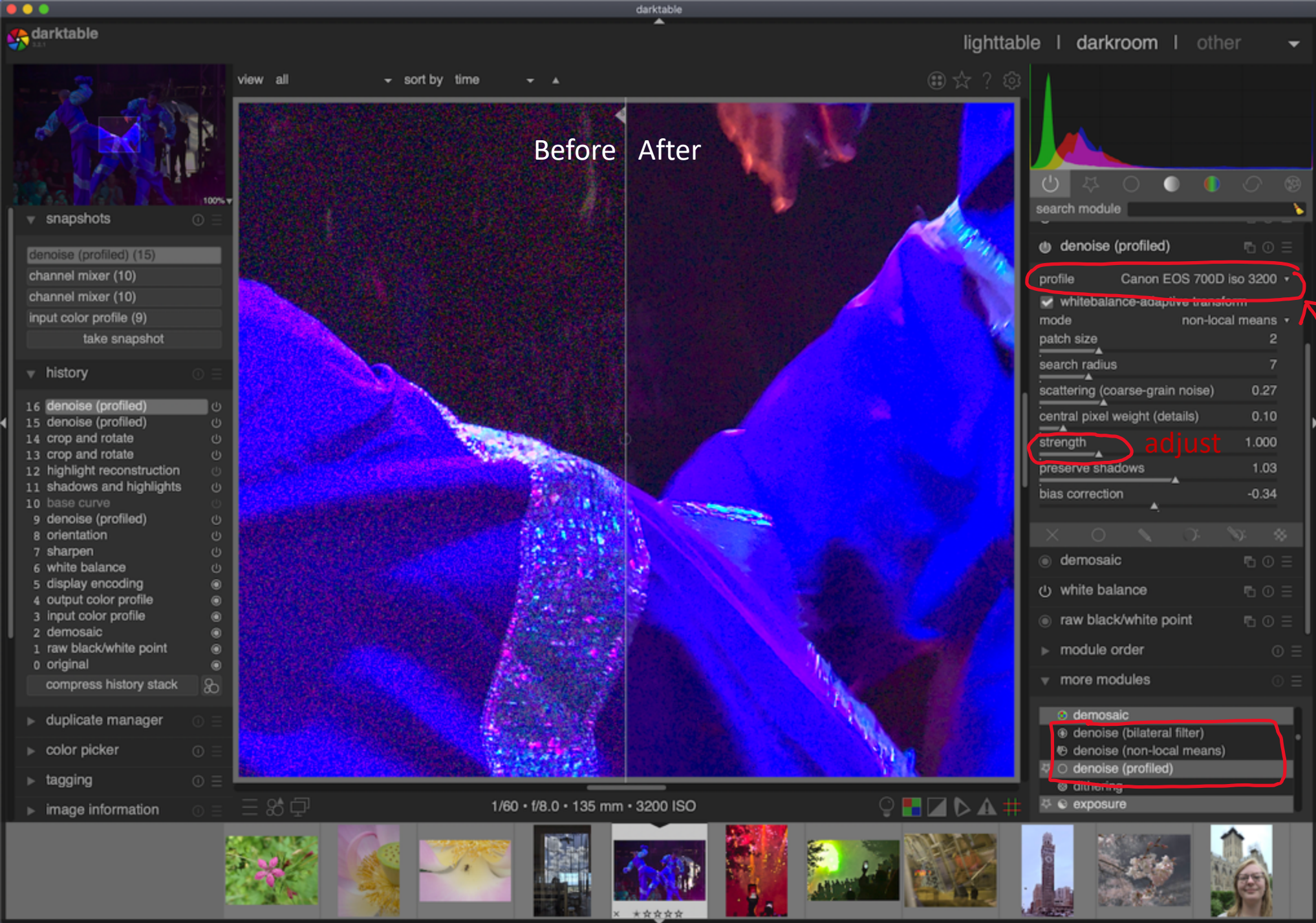
Result like adjustment brush in Light Room.



After Before

Reusing the mask shape from color zones now in the module basic adjustments.

Opposite to Light Room's approach of masks only available in Adjustment Brush, which pragmatically limits the number of sliders possible.



Tons of choices!

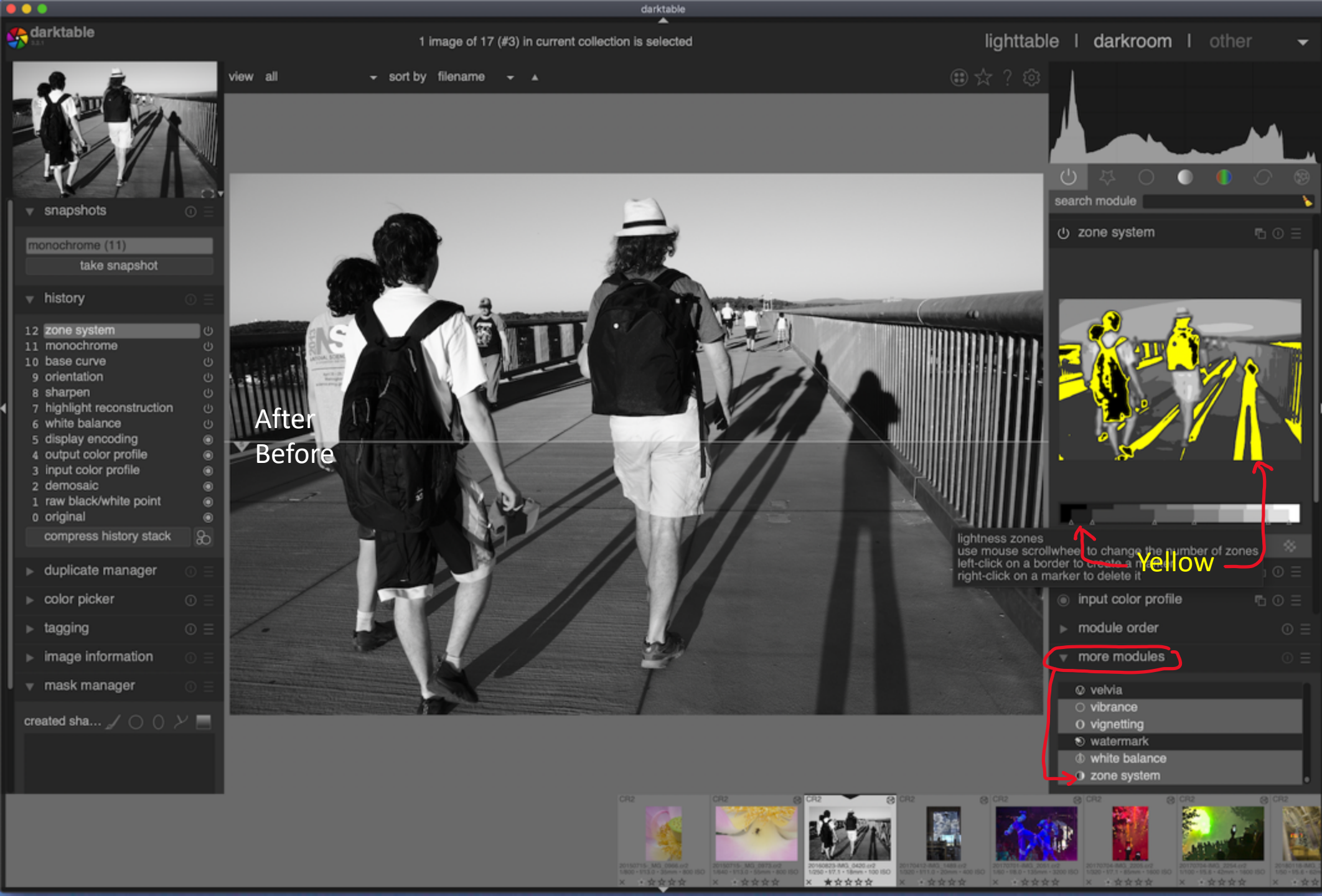
Three denoising modules!!!

Module denoise (profiled) uses your camera as the default.

## Summary of popular Light Room-like edits in darktable

- crop and rotate
- white balance
- basic adjustments for exposure and black level
- shadows and highlights for shadows, highlights, and white point.
- retouch using circle/brush for Spot Removal
- Combined use of drawn and parametric masks for LR's Adjustment Brush with auto mask.
- denoise (profile) for Noise Reduction

**Next: Some things you can do in darktable but not in Light Room**

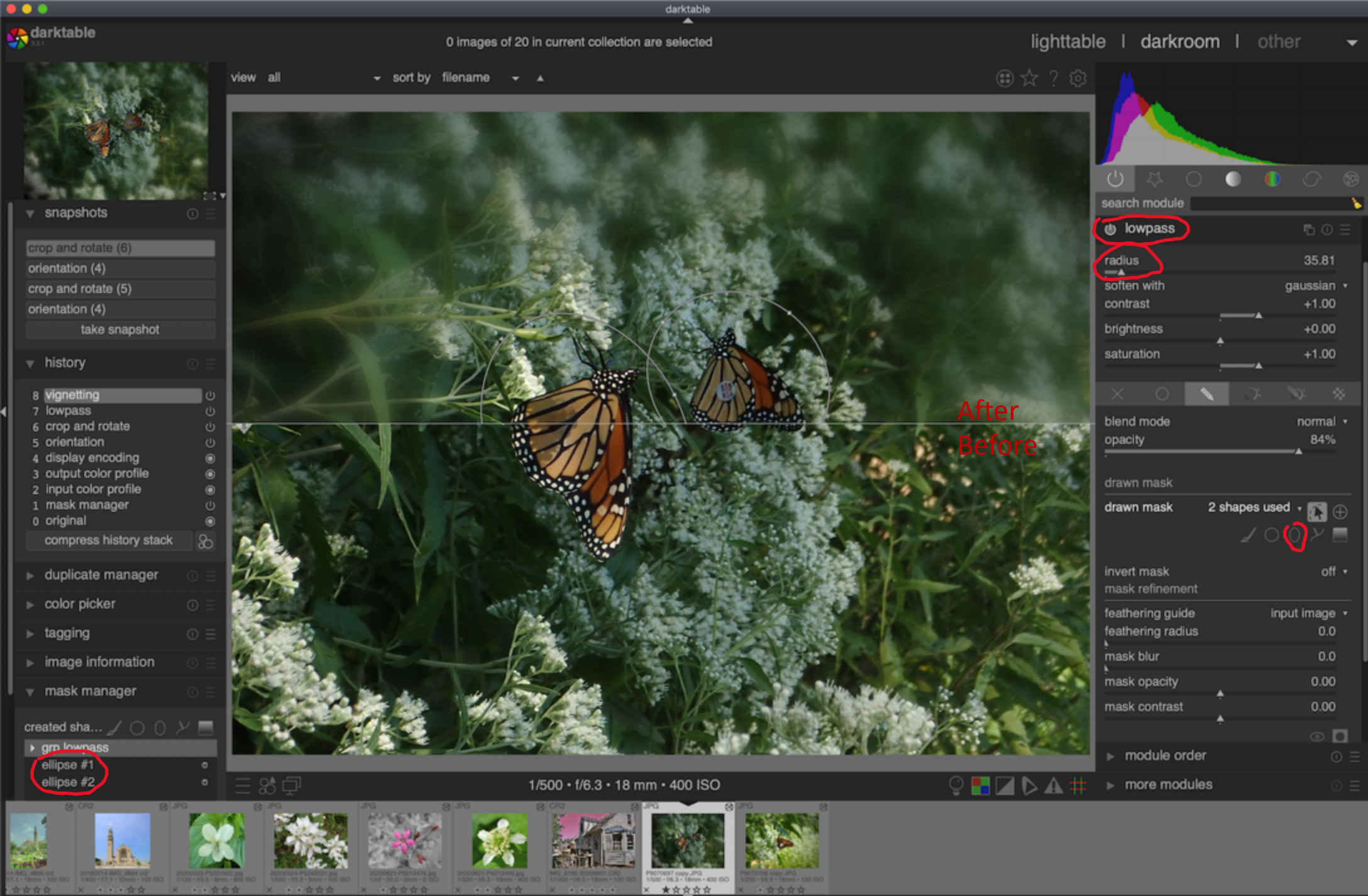


darktable has lots of advanced features, beyond Light Room.

For example, Ansel Adam's zone system.

Adjusting grey boxes to make blacks "inky."

More sophisticated than Whites, Highlights, Shadows, Blacks.



Selective focus

lowpass filter  
with two  
inverted oval  
masks

vignetting

After  
Before



feature	Light Room	darktable
<b>Overall</b>		
memory leak, need to restart for some users	<b>yes</b>	no
learning curve	steep	steeper
organization of features	good	middling due to many options
speed and screen refresh	good	slower
bugs	none except leak	some
after cancellation, access to images/export/printing but no editing	<b>no longer</b>	Open source/free so no restriction

# darktable Version 3.2

## A Free Alternative to Light Room

Thank you! tanya.riseman@gmail.com

Manual for version 3.0 <https://darktable.gitlab.io/doc/en/>

Videos by Rico Richardson

<https://www.youtube.com/c/RicosStory/videos>

Videos by Bruce Williams Photography

<https://www.youtube.com/user/audio2u/videos>

<https://mathiashueber.com/migrate-from-lightroom-to-open-source-alternative/>  
<https://mathiashueber.com/darktable-settings-for-lightroom-user/>



At present, darktable is able to deal with the following metadata of Lightroom generated sidecar files during the import phase:

- tags and hierarchical tags
- color labels
- ratings
- GPS information

At present, darktable is able to deal with the following development steps from Lightroom-generated XMP files (with the corresponding darktable module in parentheses):

- crop and rotate (*crop and rotate*)
- black level (*exposure*)
- exposure(*exposure*)
- vignette(*vignette*)
- clarity (*local contrast*)
- tone curve (*tone curve*)
- HSL (*color zones*)
- split-toning(*split-toning*)
- grain(*grain*)
- spot removal (*spot removal*)

It's just meant to help you recover part of the work you have invested into your image in case you migrate to darktable. **It is very important to understand that this import process will never give identical results.**