



Close-Up

Why Compete?
Photographing Flowers
Local Tone Adjustments
Member Profile: Pearson Morey
Compact Cameras
Henri Cartier-Bresson: Images
Continuous Lighting Equipment
Beginners' Corner:
Rule Of Thirds, Or Not
and more

"Reach for the Stars" by Jonathan Adams

Victoria Camera Club

March 2018 Volume 71 Number 3

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Victoria Camera Club



"Victoria Harbour Full Moon" by Ian Faris

Established in 1944, the Victoria Camera Club is a group of people who share the love of photography. We come together to appreciate each other's images, to learn, both from the feedback on our own images and from the images of others, and to exchange tips on how and where to take effective photographs. Our focus is on continuous learning. Our media include both film and digital and our expertise ranges from novice to master.

Events

We hold a number of events including:

- Three meetings a month from September to April (excluding December)
- Field trips
- Workshops
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
- Competitions within the Club and externally

Meetings begin at 7:30 PM at Norway House, 1110 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC.

Membership

Annual fees include all workshops (except studio shoots and special events), meetings and all field trips unless travel/accommodation is involved. Annual fees are: Individual, \$85; Family, \$128; Student, \$43.

For current event information and locations please go to the website victoriacameraclub.ca where you can also read or download the colour version of *Close-Up*.

Close-Up is the magazine of the Victoria Camera Club.

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What's Inside

Club Calendar and President's Message	4
Why Compete?	5
Photographing Flowers.....	6
CAPA/PSA Competitions.....	8
Local Tone Adjustments	9
Competition Info	10
Member Profile: Pearson Morey.....	17
Compact Cameras.....	19
Henri Cartier-Bresson: Images	20
How I Did It	22
Shoots Around Victoria	23
Continuous Lighting Equipment.....	24
Beginners' Corner: Rule Of Thirds, Or Not	26

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March 2018

The Victoria Camera Club is a member society of the Victoria Arts Council, Canadian Association for Photographic Arts (CAPA), and the Photographic Society of America (PSA).



Calendar

Our workshop and field trip program is too extensive to list in *Close-Up*. Please go to the calendar page on the website (www.victoriacameraclub.ca) for the latest details of all our workshops, field trips and meetings.

March 1st: Competition Night

The February competition results will be presented. The March theme competition is "Portrait of a Person in their Environment." The deadline for submissions is March 1st.

March 8th: Presentation Night

Our guest speakers are Ted and Evelyn Nodwell who will talk about "Creating Stronger Travel Images: Photographing Life and People."

March 15th: Members' Night

Presentation of members' images, field trip slide shows, prints or short technical topics.

Workshop and Field Trip Highlights

Advanced Portraiture Lighting workshop and Sooke Pot-holes/Mary Vine Falls field trip.

Cover Image: "Reach for the Stars" by Jonathan Adams. This photo of our home galaxy, the Milky Way, was taken in August 2015 in the Patriarch Grove in the White Mountains of California. The trees silhouetted in the foreground are Bristlecone Pines, the longest living organisms on earth. The trees are very dense and resinous, and do not decay but rather erode away over many years. The dead trees often take on gnarled, twisted shapes with intricate curves sculpted away by wind and sand.

These trees lie at the end of a very primitive road that rises to 3,350 meters. Despite the remoteness of the location, there was still some light pollution on the horizon from Bishop, CA, the nearest town which is at 1,250 meters elevation. I had planned this visit at the new moon to bring out as much faint detail in the sky as possible. Despite the lights in the distance, it was the darkest sky I have ever experienced and I was able to make out faint shadows cast by the light of the Milky Way.

The photo was taken with a Fuji X-T1 camera using a Rokinon 12 mm lens, at f2.8 and ISO 3200 with a 30 second exposure.

President's Message

Membership in the Victoria Camera Club has been stable near 250 in recent years, a threshold considerably above those of a decade earlier, which makes us one of the largest camera clubs in Canada. What has attracted you to our Club and what has held your interest? Fair to say that the breadth and depth of our programs and the enthusiasm of our fellow members has likely been responsible for many of your reasons for joining and staying. It is my hope that we will be able, collectively, to maintain and to enhance our offerings for the satisfaction of the majority of our members, recognizing that some will seek other opportunities on their personal journeys.

But how do we keep all of this operating in a smooth, fine-honed manner? Well, that is at least our goal. The answer is, of course, through the dedicated efforts of our many volunteers. Our by-laws explicitly forbid that any personal remuneration be paid to members for Club-related work. That leaves you and I, as volunteers, to get the job done, which brings me to the present moment in the annual cycle of Club activities.

My request is that each of you consider how the VCC is meeting your needs and how you are contributing to our common good. Are you currently among the roster of volunteers who have taken up specific responsibilities? If so, are you willing to continue in 2018-19? Are you interested in assisting or taking on a role as a program coordinator? Are you willing to take up the challenge and stand for nomination for a position on the Board of Directors? Yes, there will be positions available and opportunities to serve at many levels in the year ahead. I invite you to pose your questions and express your interests to current committee chairs, existing directors or directly to this year's Nominating Committee. Our success in the coming year depends upon it!

Here's a question to conclude this month's message: How do you deal with GAS (gear acquisition syndrome)? Do you assiduously patrol the web, keeping up with each new camera body and lens in your system, or perhaps in others, where the grass might be even greener? When discussing photography with your colleagues, do you talk about images, as recommended by Tony Bonsall during his recent presentation to the Club, or do you drift into discussing gear. Me? I straddle that divide. Hey, look at that great light across the harbour. Grab my camera, but where is my new and now favourite lens? Oh, yes, on my camera, where it almost always is these days.

Garry Schaefer, President

Why Compete?

by Leah Gray

I have stamped my foot and decided not to compete in Club competitions this year. Why? I didn't like the way a judge commented, so there. But I miss it! So why compete at all? There are photographers who are happy to spend their entire photographic careers not competing, so why am I unhappy?

When I joined the Club (in 2015), I felt I was a pretty good photographer. Competing in the Club competitions really opened my eyes. One can be quickly humbled when one realizes that the glaring red object in the corner has been missed (crop!) or a few dust spots were overlooked (sloppy!), or the worst offense of all, the photo is boring.

Whether you take the advice of a judge to heart, or actively choose to ignore it, there is nothing like competing to make you sort and evaluate your images. "Did you come up with a monochrome image this month?" was a common question in my household. I have learned that converting an image to black and white simply because you need an image for this month's category isn't always the best option. With the help of a couple of Club workshops I have since educated myself on what makes a good black and white image. My images are always a "work in progress," but I am hoping that they have improved.

To combat my absence in the VCC internal competitions this year, I have sought out other ways to get feedback on my images. Casual image review groups with other Club members have proven particularly valuable. Live comments are educational and appreciated by both the reviewer and the recipient. It is always fun to see what moves people and it is not always what I expect. I have benefited from some brilliant critiques this year.

I am changing my ideas for selecting images for competition as I venture outside the Club. What fun it is to see how my images measure up. It is always fascinating to see what does well in each category, as the rules are very different from the Club's rules. Read them very carefully!

Images may do well in one particular category, even though they may fit into several. For instance, "Serengeti Sunset" was taken in Tanzania. I could place this image in the Open Colour category, but perhaps Nature would give it a better chance. Similarly, "Mother" could go into Monochrome and Wildlife, but it is a wild elephant, not a zoo animal, so I will opt for Wildlife.



"Serengeti Sunset"

There are often specific subjects for many of the competitions. Several salons have sub-categories in a division. One upcoming competition has a sub-group of flowers in the Colour Category. Now I need to go out and shoot some amazing images of flowers. What a fun challenge!

Another aspect of competition that I am beginning to study is naming images. I find this the most difficult aspect of entering a competition. A name can transform an image positively or bring it down. I once received a review that was entirely based on my quick selection of a name. Needless to say the judge did not like my image. I now know why many photographers use simple and modest names.

In conclusion, photographic competitions encourage you to stretch your artistic muscles (and technical ones too). This exercise is beneficial for any photographer, and learning something new is always worthwhile.



"Mother"

Photographing Flowers

by Richard James

This is the first article in a two part series and deals with the technical aspects of photographing flowers. Part two will deal with the creative side of producing flower images.

Firstly, what is your objective? Is it to create images complying with our Club's rules for "Nature Images," or those of CAPA/PSA/FIAP or another competition, or, is it to let your artistic licence run wild and develop an interpretation of flowers in a more artistic/creative manner? If the former, you are producing a near documentary interpretation with limited room for creativity. If the latter, you can look forward to next month's article.

Here I will deal with equipment and techniques. I will cover, cameras, lenses, camera supports, lighting, and accessories as well as specific techniques applicable to full-flower images rather than true macro (1:1 magnification or greater) imagery.

As far as camera bodies go, there are no specific requirements for shooting flowers. Just be fully familiar with your camera and its operation.

In the arena of lenses we have choices. For magnifications less than about 1:3 to 1:4, any standard lens should be able to focus so macro capability is not needed. Going towards, and a bit higher than, 1:1 magnification then a macro lens is the optimal way to go. In addition to close focusing, true macro lenses are designed with a flatter focus plane thus minimizing depth-of-field distortion. Note that some zoom lenses are said to have macro capability, but unless this goes down to close to 1:1 magnification they may not do the job very well. They will also be more prone to lens aberration issues than a prime lens.

Alternatives to a macro lens include extension tubes, a set of metal tubes with no glass elements that fit between the lens and camera body. This moves the lens away from the focal plane allowing it to focus on closer objects, but removing the ability to focus to infinity. They do not introduce lens aberrations but as with all higher magnification images, they require exposure increases. Another alternative is to use close-up lenses that are similar to a screw-on filter but with a magnifying lens in front of the camera lens. You can also use a teleconverter for a 1.4x or 2x increase in magnification and a corresponding 1 or 2-stop exposure loss.

A tripod is pretty well essential for obtaining higher depth-of-field in flower photography. Your tripod for any photog-

raphy needs to be sturdy enough to rigidly support your camera, lens and accessories. The best advice is to not extend the center column (my tripod does not have one) as it is the least rigid part of the system. Legs that fold flat to the ground are very desirable although there are workarounds for this. A sturdy ball-head and quick-release clamping system are also recommended.

The required exposure changes as magnification increases as the same amount of incoming light is spread across a larger area of the sensor. If you are using any automatic or semiautomatic mode then the camera will compensate for this, however, if you are setting your exposure manually you need to check and adjust to make sure that you compensate for it. Remember that to maximize image quality you want to ensure that you use the full dynamic range of the sensor by 'exposing to the right' (known as ETTR) when saving RAW images.

Lighting is key to all photography. For flowers you have a choice of bright sun, slight overcast (with some shadows), flat lighting, or, you can design your own lighting with flash and reflectors. The way the shadows fall within a flower is key to expressing its shape whether you are producing the image in colour or black and white. If you are using a fill-flash then your objective is to minimize shadows but still have them there. If you're using flash only, where the flash overpowers the ambient light, you need to consider the placement of the shadows as you set up one or more flash units.

An aspect of lighting that is often missed when photographing plants is that many leaves are quite reflective and the camera picks up this glare that looks unnatural. This can often be remedied, or at least minimized, by using a polarizing filter as you can't get rid of this in post-processing.

Backgrounds are very important in flower photography. Do you want to show the flower in its environment, or totally isolated from it? In either case you need to make sure that there are no distracting objects in the frame. A blurred or partially blurred object is as bad as one that is in focus if it takes your eye away from the key part of the image. If you are doing a flower portrait then you have the option of a natural or artificial background. An artificial background could be black, white, or a translucent white background lit from behind giving diffused backlight on the flower. A collapsible reflector or a piece of cardboard can be used for the first two and a piece of acrylic sheet about 30-45 cm square for the translucent background.

Focusing and depth-of-field are always a concern with flower photography. The higher the magnification, the shallower the depth-of-field becomes. Whilst not impos-

sible, handholding becomes more challenging as you get closer to the flower and it becomes bigger in the image.

Since a lens that is stopped down to its minimum aperture for maximum depth-of-field is not producing the highest acuity image possible and still may not give you enough depth-of-field, focus stacking is a way of getting what you need. This would be the subject of a separate article but in simple terms you either adjust the focus point of the image as you take multiple shots without moving the camera, or you leave the focus point fixed and move the camera between frames. This can be done manually or using camera control software. The images are then merged in post-processing to take the most in-focus section of each frame and composite them together as the final image.

Camera remote control is a useful tool for both controlling the camera and displaying the image on a much larger screen than the camera's LCD screen. The software can adjust camera settings as well as manage focus stacking using the camera or an automated focus rail. One caveat is that a wired USB connection is much faster and cheaper than wireless so make sure your tablet or camera properly supports USB (preferably USB 3).

There are a few other useful tools that you may want to carry with you. A couple of artist's paintbrushes and a pair of tweezers for removing stray objects from the scene. Since you want to get low to shoot flowers a sheet of plastic to lay on the ground is really useful, especially when it is wet. A piece of fabric or cards to act as a wind-screen around your subject as well as a clamp such as the "Plamp", which is two plastic clamps on a flexible arm to hold the subject steadier helps a lot on windy days.

Now a few thoughts on technique. When we are walking through a field of flowers, we are typically looking

down towards the ground. However, is that the best way to show a flower in an image? In many cases flowers are like mammals and birds, 'eye level' is the best way to photograph them. That's the reason I have 'plastic sheet' in the miscellaneous items above! It's also the reason why you need to be able to hold your camera close to ground level in a very stable way, with a tripod whose legs fold flat and, if necessary, camera bars to get you even lower.

Your technique is dictated in part by the style of image you want to produce: documentary or creative. If you are being creative, then wind movement may not be an issue but simply a tool to be taken advantage of. On the other hand, an image that shows all the visible, and sometimes invisible, details inside the flower itself is going to require a very stationary subject and camera technique to match. So a wide aperture and slow shutter speed might be appropriate for the creative image but for utmost detail you want a high shutter speed to freeze movement and a relatively small aperture to give you good depth of field, or use focus stacking.

Your lighting technique, whether using natural light, fill light by reflector or flash, or flash only, is another area that you need to consider. Generally deep shadows are not good so fill light will often be required unless the natural light is very flat. I find a 30 cm silver or white reflector to be very useful when shooting flowers and mushrooms as it can be used to direct the light back up inside the flower, or under the mushroom. This is often all that is required. You can get more creative with lighting adding rim light to highlight the edges or backlight shining through the flower petals.

These images show three image styles: Close-up, Group and Environment. Each style sends a different message about the subject and the maker's intent. The Camas image isolates the flower from its environment, the Chocolate Lily image shows how they grow in groups and some of the environment, while the Balsam Root image shows the full environment.



"Blue Camas, *Camassia quamash*"



"Chocolate Lily, *Fritillaria affinis*"



"Balsam Root, *Balsamorhiza deltoidea*"

CAPA/PSA Competitions

Both CAPA (Canadian Association for Photographic Art) and PSA (Photographic Society of America) organize competitions for individuals and clubs that are members of their organization. In addition, PSA recognizes a very large number of exhibitions (salons) organized by clubs and societies around the world.

PSA and CAPA competitions for members and clubs generally have a single theme or topic, whilst the exhibitions generally have multiple themes or topics (sections) corresponding to PSA divisions. This year the Club is entering selected CAPA and PSA competitions. We are also hosting a CAPA competition. We also encourage members who are individual members of CAPA or PSA to enter their individual competitions.

Exhibitions are open to all entrants independent of their affiliation with the host or sponsoring organization. In these events you are competing with a worldwide group of your peers. Exhibitions are always juried and acceptance of an image is the first step. After the jury selection, the images are then judged. Approximately 25-45% of submissions are accepted in most exhibitions. Generally, all images in a section are judged together but some

exhibitions will split multiple submissions and judge them individually so that you are not competing with yourself.

PSA sets strict standards for judging conditions to ensure that different exhibitions display their images in a consistent manner.

Exhibitions are required to publish a catalogue of all accepted entries, not just the winners. Most exhibitions accept on-line entry and payment although print entries have to be shipped.

There are a large number of exhibitions to choose from so it is necessary to narrow your focus. For example there are 38 exhibitions listed with closing dates in March 2018. From these you can choose the themes that you are most interested in and the countries you wish to focus on. Judges will have varying preferences depending on their photographic backgrounds but also the part of the world they are in and the styles of image that are favoured there.

PSA also runs a "Star Rating" system that allows you to accumulate points and receive recognition for your work.

The Club hosted PSA exhibitions in Victoria 22 times between 1941 and 1966.



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Local Tone Adjustments

by Neil Schemenauer

Every image display system has limitations on its contrast ratio, the difference between the brightest white and the darkest black that it can display. In practice, this contrast ratio is usually much less than a photographer would desire in order to best present their work. Care must be taken to best use the limited resource of display contrast.

A first step to make the best use of the contrast range is to adjust the white-point and black-point of the image. Next, the gamma (brightness midpoint) can be adjusted to give the image a lighter or darker look. A more advanced tool for doing these adjustments is the tone curve which allows you to adjust a curve that maps input to output brightness. While the tone curve tool initially looks confusing and intimidating, it is worth the time to learn to use it.

The adjustments described are global in nature, so they affect the whole image. They also work with a limited 'contrast budget'. With the tone curve, you can increase the steepness (contrast) of the curve in a certain brightness range but then you must flatten it (decrease contrast) elsewhere. We will introduce tone adjustments that are localized and can therefore break free of this 'contrast budget.' Localized adjustments must be applied with care as they can cause processing artefacts to appear.

To demonstrate this, I have composed a simple image (left figure), a low contrast grey circle on a grey background. The outer border is a smooth gradient that spans the whole tone range. While this image is simple and artificial, you can imagine a real image that contains some low contrast regions while the whole image has high contrast.

We would like the circle to have more contrast with the background. However, if we want to keep the outer bor-

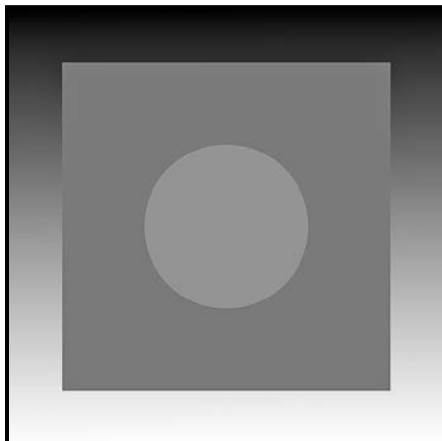
der gradient, there is not much to be done, at least with global tone adjustments. Tones can be adjusted locally by dodging and burning but since the image is split into sections, you could do this for each one using hard boundaries. However, real images usually do not have such neat boundaries and so we will avoid using them.

In digital photography, local tone adjustment (also known as tone mapping) is similar to dodging and burning. Some image processing software has built-in support for easily doing local tone adjustments. In Adobe Lightroom the 'Shadows' and 'Highlights' sliders do local tone adjustment. The technique that follows is a Photoshop method that produces similar results and should give more insight into how these adjustments work.

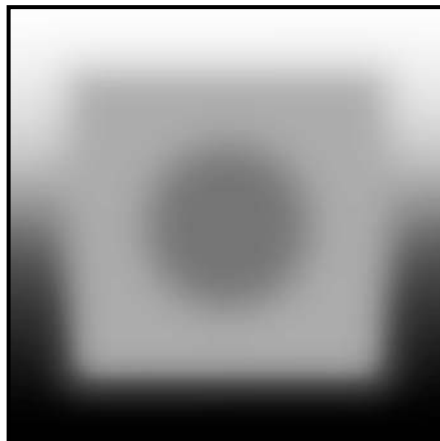
The masking layer (middle figure) is a blurred duplicate of the original image. I used a large blur radius, inverted the result and then used the tone curve to adjust the brightness and contrast of the mask. The mask was combined with the original image using the 'Overlay' blending mode that causes the mask to effectively dodge and burn the original image, depending on the brightness of the mask.

The large radius Gaussian blur mostly isolated bright and dark sections of the original image but the borders between sections are fuzzy. That fuzziness causes artefacts in the final image (i.e. a brightness gradient when previously there was none). In real photos, these fuzzy borders can appear around the edges of objects on light or dark backgrounds and produce a halo effect.

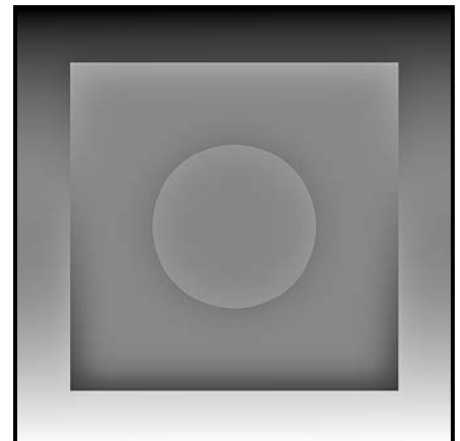
The final image (right image) has better contrast between the circle and its background. However, some visible artefacts have also been introduced. What used to be solid areas of a single tone now have some tonal variation. The artefacts cause the circle to look a bit 3-D rather than flat. These artefacts appear at the edges of the regions where the image has been locally brightened or darkened.



"Original"



"Mask"



"Final"

Improve Your Photography with Themes

by Pam Irvine

Our competitions include a Theme category each month to challenge members to shoot subjects that are outside their normal photographic box. Also activities like painting, sculpting, drawing, and photography are relaxing and rewarding hobbies that may lower your stress levels and leave you feeling mentally clear and calm.

Creating art provides a distraction, giving your brain a break from your usual thoughts. When you get totally immersed in a creative endeavour, you may find yourself in what's known as "the zone" or in a state of flow. Creating art trains you to concentrate on details and pay more attention to your environment. In this way, art acts like meditation. Personally I find I need to be alone when shooting to achieve this state, but field trips can help to get you out to new locations and no one expects you to be social. They are all there for the same reason so you can zone-out and it's OK.

Most of us want to improve our skills, to be inspired, and to find more time and energy to pursue our passion. If you are looking for a way to dramatically improve your photography this year, consider starting a "52" or "365" project. (You do not have to wait for the beginning of the year.)

The Internet is full of weekly or daily photography challenges with lots of different suggestions for themes.

The Daily Post announces a new theme every Wednesday. PetaPixel has a downloadable PDF with the full list of 52 challenges. Print it out and reference it each week. Digital Photography School also runs a weekly challenge and you can submit your image for others to see. There are sites that focus on wildlife or nature photography and Photo Argus has a list of 52 places to photograph.

If you really want to push yourself, try a daily challenge. Every image may not be a keeper but your photographic skills will improve and you will develop the feel for how your camera works so you can change settings without having to pull your eye away from the viewfinder to look at the camera buttons. Your images can't help but get better as you feel more comfortable with your camera.

You can create your own themes, get them from the Internet or use ours but the important thing is to get out there and start shooting something different. Your photographic skills will improve and your brain will thank you.

January 2018 Competition Judges

We extend our sincere thanks to the external judges for the January Intermediate and Advanced competitions: Neil le Nobel, Gilles Vezina, Hazel Breitreutz and Gregg Eligh. We would also like to thank our in-house Novice Judges: Normand Marcotte, Martin Wright, Steve Lustig, Anne McCarthy, Lorna Zaback and Caspar Davis. All images and judges' comments are available at: victoriacameraclub.ca/Competitions/CompetitionResults.aspx.

Gregg Eligh: Advanced Prints. Gregg is a good friend to the club for his judging over the years and his inspiring workshops. He currently teaches continuing education photography courses at Camosun College. Gregg has worked across North America and the Caribbean doing corporate, editorial, catalogue and advertising photography. Gregg's work can also be seen in several gallery shows every year. gregg@elighphoto.

Neil leNobel: Wildlife and Natural World. Neil has enjoyed photography for more than thirty years. He spent his working life as a geologist for an international mining company that sent him to many places around the globe. Neil is currently a member of the Richmond Photo Club and the Canadian Association for Photographic Art (CAPA). He is the past Competitions Chair for the Club and a former Field Trips Coordinator for CAPA, Pacific Zone. He shoots with both Canon and Nikon equipment.

Neil has an interest in portrait photography but also enjoys macro, location photography and nature. He has won awards for photos submitted to club sponsored and CAPA competitions. Neil is a certified CAPA photo judge. www.neillenobel.com

Gilles Vezina: Theme and Altered Reality. As a photographer based in Gatineau, PQ, Gilles has the opportunity to explore the beauty of the Ottawa region, both on the Quebec and Ontario side. He considers photography is a very versatile form of artistic expression. Photography allows him to find beauty wherever it is. Photography is a passion for him and nothing makes him happier than to share this passion. gillesvezina@me.com

Hazel Breitreutz: Open. Hazel is a member of the Crescent Beach Photography Club in South Surrey and a CAPA certified judge. She has won awards for her photographic art as well as her paintings. She is an active member of the Federation of Canadian Artists (FCA) and enjoys sharing her experience, ideas and inspiration by teaching art and photography courses and workshops.



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Advanced Monochrome Print - 1st
"Paving Paradise" by Ian Crawford

Judge's comments: There is animation, energy and motion in this scene. All the figures are active and busy, and we don't see any faces! Which is a design plus in this instance. Works very well, a perfect example of effective cropping to "fit" the image and contain the viewer's eye. This strengthens the composition.



Advanced Digital Natural World - 1st
"Vermilion Lakes" by Jonathan Adams

Judge's comments: Now that's a foreground element, complete with reflection? Good eye. In this case the photographer has chosen not to bring out the shadow details, it's all about the grass, then on to the reflection and up to the peak, set against a dramatic sky. Yes, I'm envious. Nice division of elements. Lots to look at in the way of a good landscape composition. Grass, grass and the peak surrounding the reflection! Great depth-of-field and dramatic sky. The whites have been well handled.



Advanced Digital Wildlife - 2nd
"Please Wipe your Mouth" by Steve Lustig

Judge's comments: Nice tight crop with effective off center composition. Very good detail where it counts. The shadows have been well handled and the background is great



Advanced Altered Reality - 2nd
"Sunflower Trio" by Lois Burton

Judge's comments: Nice example of altered reality with accentuated edges, strong colours and painterly treatment. Strong composition as well.



Advanced Nature Print - 1st

“Black-crowned Night Heron (Nycticorax nycticorax)”
by Richard James

Judge’s comments: Snappy, crisp capture at the right moment. Very well focused and exposed.



Advanced Open Print - 1st

“Old Car in the Forest” by Jacqui James

Judge’s comments: Effective composition and crop to place this subject in its environment. The tree framing on the left side works well to contain the viewer’s eye, while the open, distant view on the right side informs us of the location.



Advanced Digital Theme - 1st

“Alabaster Ramps, Canadian Museum For Human Rights” by Richard Marshall

Judge’s comments: Almost an Escher environment with sharp angles and pathways. Effective B&W treatment enhances the dark atmosphere of the place.



Advanced Digital Open - 1st

“Radiant Dancers” by Barbara Burns

Judge’s comments: A beautiful and well composed image filling the picture space comfortably and creatively. Very free flowing with no distracting elements. Well exposed and captured.



Intermediate Digital Natural World - 1st
"Sun Down and Through" by Daniel Rondeau

Judge's comments: Well done keeping the foreground trees. I see these trees as the object for the interesting light in the photo (as are the valley trees).



Intermediate Altered Reality - 2nd
"Summers Reminiscence!" by Graham Weir

Judge's comments: Dreamy harbour scene, fitting title. With the colour scheme, the overall composition is effective and stimulates your imagination.



Intermediate Digital Wildlife - 2nd
"Eggcellent Mother" by Mark van Arragon

Judge's comments: I love the selective focus and action shot. Not all bird shots need focus throughout, but you may know this point gets discussed (argued) over and over. In-shot framing is effective. Nest/egg on the lower third. Great choice. Very good and honest colour palette. Assuming you set the camera and used a trigger for the moment.



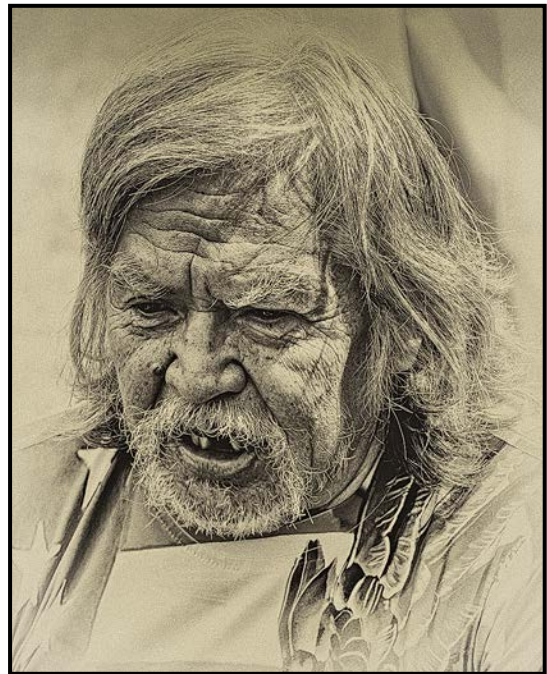
Intermediate Digital Open - 1st
"The Basket Maker" by Mary Weir

Judge's comments: Rich colours with great positioning of this woman's hardworking and skillful hands as she creates this piece of art. The exposure is well handled and also the depth of field.



Intermediate Digital Theme - 1st
"Cube House" by Graham Budd

Judge's comments: Very strong graphically, several different geometric shapes and opposing colours. Technical aspects (exposure, sharpness, contrast) well handled. Composition is very dynamic as well.



Intermediate/Novice Open Print - 1st
"Elder" by Richard Letourneun

Judge's comments: The toning and light vignette works very well with this image. There is an attractive etching like quality to this shot.



Novice Digital Open - 1st
"Catch of the Day" by Deb Thurlbeck

Judge's comments: Lovely angle, emotion and the sense of instability. It feels like the fisherman may fall into the churning water. Good capture of the light on both the fish and the man.



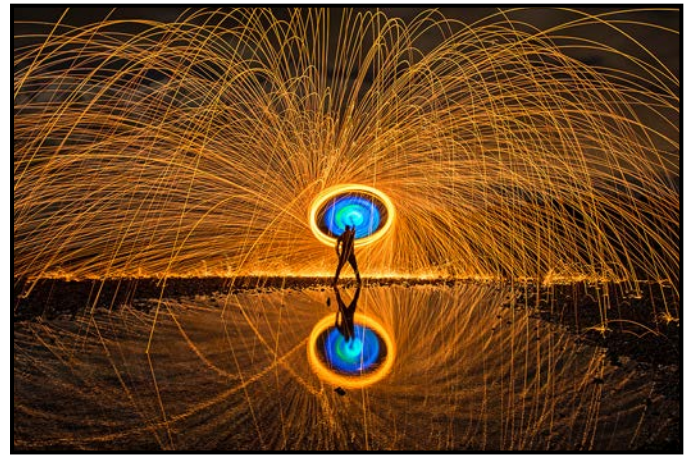
Novice Digital Natural World - 2nd
"A Wild Evening" by Teri VanWell

Judge's comments: Lovely capture of the evening light and details of the rock.



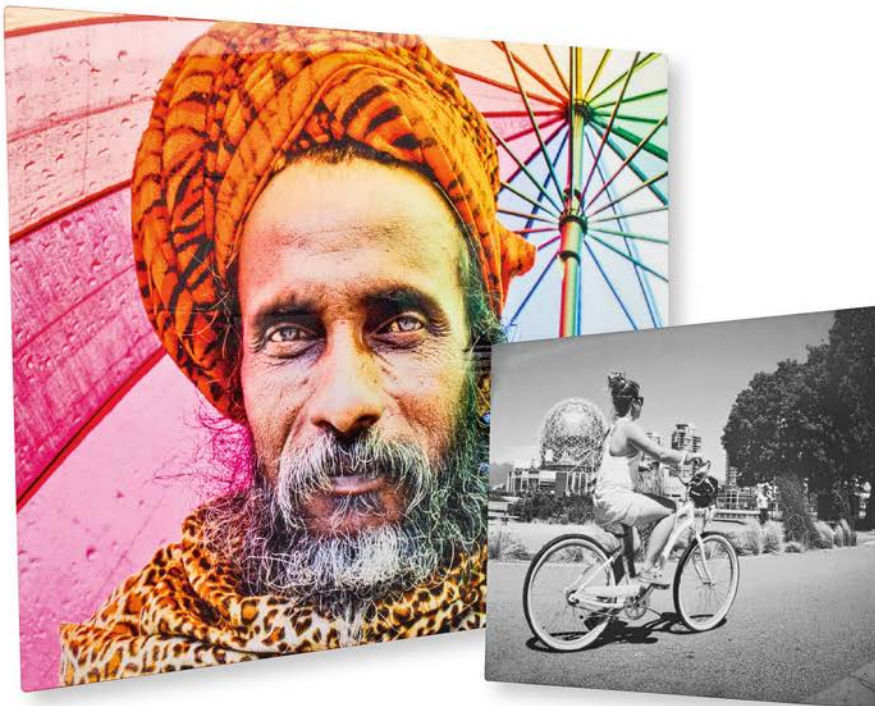
Novice Digital Wildlife - 2nd
"Just Bee-Cause" by Tim Agoston

Judge's comments: Nice diagonal flow. I love the way the bee is leading up to the more intense colour which echoes the colour of the bee. Great focus.



Novice Digital Theme - 1st
"Around We Go" by Teri VanWell

Judge's comments: A spectacular shot with intense colour and the sense of movement and power. Interesting that the man is in front of the swirl. Great reflection.



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Member Profile: Pearson Morey

I am fairly new to photography. In 2004, I took early retirement and needed an activity to keep me busy. In the past, I played hockey, snow skied, raced motorcycles and snowmobiles. These activities left me with a few physical disabilities, which limited my choices.

My dad helped me to appreciate classical music and art. Many Sunday mornings, I would wake to the sound of my dad singing along with Enrico Caruso on various opera records. In school I majored in art, giving me the background to be able to see horizons, perspective and composition. I have always appreciated a well-composed artistic endeavour. My three-dimensional experience comes from working in Eaton's display department where I learned how to attract the customer's attention quickly.

When I retired, a friend of mine was into taking photographs and I would say to myself, "I can do that too." My friend had a film camera and relied on third party processing. Even though she took excellent photos, she had no control over the final look of her pictures.

The digital camera, on the other hand, allows personal processing by way of computer software. At first I tried all the free software that was available but those did not meet my expectations. I have spent the past few years teaching myself most of the different photo software packages available so that I can personalize my photos.



"Fisgard Lighthouse at Fort Rodd Hill NHP"

I take a lot of pictures on field trips, mostly in the 16 x 9 format which allows me to crop into more interesting vignettes later. I always have my small point-and-shoot camera with me in case I see interesting shots. Even taking lots of pictures, every photograph requires careful composition.

I originally belonged to the Tuesday group which still goes out on the first and third Tuesdays of the month and meets at the Bay Centre. Depending on the month, the following Tuesday would mean there would be a two

or three week gap without any activity. That is when Dan Roy and I would go to different locations and take pictures. One day I submitted a few photos to the Tuesday website and titled the images as "Alternate Tuesday - Whatever." This sparked the beginning of the Alternate Tuesday Group to fill the void. Unlike the original Tuesday group, this one centers on photos at different destinations rather than on assigned topics. I coordinated this group until sickness forced me to relinquish the responsibility of managing it.



"Victoria Harbour on a Rainy Day"

I am still a member of the Tuesday Groups where ten to twenty fellow Club members go out to take photos of the same topic. How can my photos be different than the others but still be on the topic? After a day's shoot and after downloading my pictures to the computer, I look for details in the photos that might be interesting. Then I have to determine whether the chosen picture should be enhanced artfully or creatively. I then try various crops and filters to determine what looks best to me. Often one picture can be re-used with a variety of filters to produce a completely different effect. I am not afraid to try new approaches to achieve a certain look. It is interesting to try combinations of filters.

Overall, the choice that I made in 2004 to take up photography has been very rewarding. Since joining the Victoria Camera Club in 2013, I have met a lot of wonderful people, who have helped me look at photography in a whole new light.



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Compact Cameras

by Matt Speight

A few months ago, when my compact camera died, I did a little happy dance. I finally had my justification to go out and buy a new compact camera. I could now rationalize buying one of the latest and greatest. Working in the industry I already knew exactly what I wanted; the Panasonic ZS100.

When I bought my original point and shoot camera, the industry was quite different. Smartphones were just starting to take hold but their cameras were not at the level they are now and of no real threat to the compact camera.

Fast forward a few years and things have changed dramatically. The cellphone camera has revolutionized how people take photos. While the popularity of phone cameras is frowned upon by some photographers the smartphone camera has sped up the process of innovation, which we all benefit from. Camera manufacturers have worked hard to attract the consumer away from their phone cameras. The ZS100 is a prime example. It is a 1" sensor camera that is now the most popular size in compact cameras.

When I bought my first compact camera six years ago, sensors in compacts vary from 1/2.5" to the largest size of 1/1.63" which is not a huge difference, just 2 mm when measured diagonally. If you're trying to picture how big a 1/1.63" sensor is in the real world it's about half the size of your baby fingernail.

The larger sensor in the ZS100 means every pixel is about 2x larger than a 1/1.63 sensor with the equivalent megapixel count. With that increased light gathering capacity getting to the camera processor you'll get a much better dynamic range. Your whites are less likely to be blown out and the blacks will have more detail, and you'll see a general increase in detail across the whole image.

The ability to increase your ISO above 200 becomes a reality without getting grainy or smudgy images. I have taken very usable images from my ZS100 at 1600 ISO.

Image quality of course is only part of the equation with any camera. It is also about how it feels in the hand and how easy it is to access those controls. The ZS100 allows users to control the shutter speed and aperture in a way that rivals a SLR. Its four function buttons are customizable and it even has a rotating ring at the outer side of the lens that controls the f-stop similar to an old school aperture ring. You can customize this ring too, to adjust a

variety of options like zoom, white balance, and the ISO. The ring also gives something for your left hand to hold onto when shooting.

Panasonic listened to consumers' demands for an optical viewfinder, another feature that sets it apart from your smart phone. The ZS100 finder isn't particularly large but it gets the job done in bright conditions, when it's hard to see the screen. It also allows me to hold the camera in a much steadier position when using the long end of the zoom range. I use the touch screen for the majority of my shooting simply because I love having the ability of touching the screen to quickly tell the camera where I want my focus point.

The lens on the ZS100 has the largest zoom range of any 1" camera. Panasonic have been able to put a 25-250 mm (35 mm equivalent) lens in a pocket-sized package. OK it won't fit in your jeans pocket but will fit in your jacket pocket. It's a Leica lens that performs well, apart from some degradation in image quality from diffraction as you stop down beyond f5.6 at the wide-angle end.

Now the final decider for me in choosing the Panasonic over the competition was the 4K photo option. The camera uses 4K video technology to great effect. For example, in the post-focus mode, it takes 30 shots changing the focus point in each one; 15 in front and 15 behind where the initial focus was when you pressed the shutter. When reviewing the image, touch the image on the screen and watch that part of the scene change from being out-of-focus to in-focus. It is truly amazing. I love using it for macro where just a slight movement of the subject can result in the focus being lost. The 4k pre-burst mode is also pretty amazing. The camera switches to a 30 fps continuous shooting mode. It also records the action a second before you touch the shutter button, so you are less likely to miss the moment.

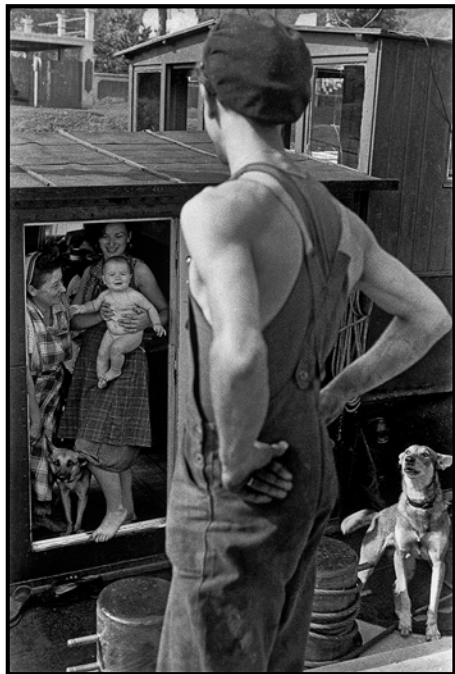
The only issues I have with the camera are the finish on the metal of the body, it is beautiful but very smooth, making the camera a bit slippery in the hand. I also wish the viewfinder were bigger.

So, 1" sensor cameras like the ZS100 are an intelligent response by the camera manufacturers to offset the smart phone competition. They have a quality and a feature set that phone cameras can't match. If you are using your phone instead of a compact camera it might be worth rethinking what a compact camera can now offer you. I love the ZS100 and have taken more images with it recently than my interchangeable lens system. I slip it into my jacket and off I go.

Henri Cartier-Bresson: Images

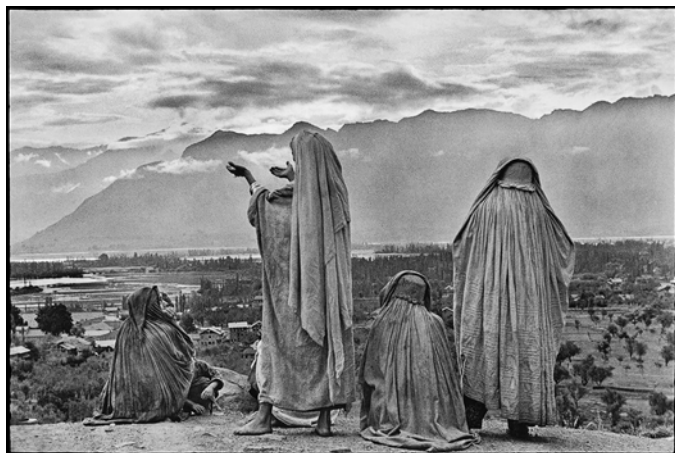
by Martin Wright

In the January issue of *Close-Up* I discussed Henri Cartier-Bresson's famous prime directive, "The Decisive Moment." In these four images I will further elaborate on that theme.



"Bargeman on Seine River, 1957"

In this composition we experience a moment sublime, personal, and achingly universal. We see the dog is happy to see the Bargeman, the mother is lovingly holding the baby, and the doting grandma is gazing at the baby. Our eyes are again led back to the dog and back up to the bargeman. We can't see the bargeman's expression. The viewer sees the delightful contact between baby and bargeman. His axiom that, "Geometry is everything," is evident here in a marvellous example of form and function, setting and story.



"Muslim Women Praying, Srinagar, Kashmir, 1948"

Was HCB just a voyeur with a photographer's eye? "No," some say, "He looked with a questioning gaze not a judgemental eye." His choice of camera angle and the early dawn lighting barely reveal the robed figures. Three women are in counterpoint to the illuminating moment of the one woman, standing with her hands outstretched in prayer. Is she beseeching, perhaps thanking, or acknowledging life? We don't know. It is at once a quiet personal moment in their lives yet a timeless moment as her hands as it were, are speaking silently for us.



"Abruzzi, 1953, Woman with Tray of Bread"

Photojournalism is primarily about storytelling. The title is not very helpful as Abruzzi is a large region of Italy close to the Adriatic Sea. Here again HCB used geometric shapes to take viewer's eye on a visual journey that inevitably takes us back to the woman carrying a tray of bread balanced on her head, her hands as it were, are speaking silently for us. It has been said "HCB extracted meaning from the flux of life." Everywhere you look in this image there is a story that speaks volumes about life in a small Italian town in the 1950s.

Bob Dylan in his book "Chronicles," describes New York- "... the claustrophobic alleys ..." In the next image we see the claustrophobic alley. The camera angle exaggerates, with enough visible detail, the geometry of the environment and the placement of two characters tell a story.

Though he was never fully in favour of cropping and excessive darkroom manipulation, from 1967 to 1997 master printer Voja Mitrovic did this in his printing for HCB. In my research I saw clear examples of judicious cropping in some of his images. All his images required some degree of darkroom work.



"New York, 1947"

HCB's reputation, in the history of photography, was well earned. His influence on photojournalism and his famous dictum, the "Decisive Moment," still resonates. For me his photography reveals a special moment in time that implies past and future.



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How I Did It

Departures

by Karl Schoepp

I have to admit that, at the moment of capture, I did not expect my photograph to be usable. This photograph is a great example of being in the right place at the right time, and using manual camera settings correctly. I took this photograph when I was on a recent holiday, travelling to France via the Eurostar train from St. Pancras International railway station in London, England.

The man who is featured in the photograph just happened to be in this position when I tried to take a photograph of the train. This photograph was taken with my Pentax 6x7 medium format film camera, with a wide-angle 55 mm f3.5 lens. I shot somewhere between f4-8, at 1/60th sec.

At the instant I took the photograph I thought it would not turn out, as I had to hand hold the camera with a large mirror slap at 1/60th of a second due to lack of ambient light. As well, I was fortunately able to get far enough back so that everything important in the frame could be either focused to infinity or within the depth-of-field that I was able to achieve.

I shot this photograph on my favourite black and white film stock, Fuji Neopan Acros 100. The film was then pushed by two stops to ISO 400 in development at Prism Imaging. I then scanned the 6x7 cm negative with my Epson Perfection V600 Photo Scanner and only slightly adjusted the contrast with the Epson scanning software. As I am an in-camera purist, I did not use any post-processing software and did not digitally remove any dust and scratches etc. I am proud to say that this image is not a monochrome conversion; it is true black and white image created by the chemical process.



Chihuly Sunblast

by Don Piper

Dale Chihuly is an American glass sculptor from Tacoma WA. He put on a blown-glass display at the Botanical Gardens in Phoenix, AZ. This is one of his many glass pieces that were spread around the gardens. This piece is nearly a ball with a circumference of approximately six feet. I shot a number of his pieces during the day. At dusk the gardens were closed and the general public was asked to leave. A number of photographers who paid an extra fee were allowed to stay until after dark. Then they turned on hundreds of lights to illuminate the various sculptures throughout the gardens. We were able to roam through the grounds and shoot the various sculptures with no one to get in our way. This was a tremendous experience and I was able to talk to a number of other photographers on-site.



Because the grounds are so large I was able to move around and set up shots from various angles. It was a moonless night and no flash photography was allowed. It was quite an experience.

This shot was set on a tripod, then the barrel of my lens was rotated as I released the shutter. I did take several shots to time the lens zoom with the shutter release. I tried to zoom both in and then out. I don't recall which way I zoomed this image to make it work.

I took this with my old travel camera, a Nikon D70s, ISO 200, 1/15th sec. at f4.2, with a 18-70 mm lens which caught the moment at 38 mm.

There was very little post-capture processing. It was either capture it on-site or not. I did have to remove a small cactus from one side and a reflection of a small light from the other side. Some of these photo opportunities are made available through the Arizona Highways magazine, one of my favourites.

Have fun!

Tuesday Shoots

by Daniel A. Roy

As March arrives, so come spring and flowers and budding leaves and milder temperatures. Come out for an adventure with the Tuesday Shooters for another set of sometimes challenging but always-fun field trips.

March 6th: Tod Inlet. We will begin our trek at the trail head on Wallace Drive opposite Quarry Lake near Butchart Gardens. This park was a traditional area used by the Saanich First Nations called Snidcel, “place of the blue grouse,” a symbol meaning the land was plentiful. The inlet is truly a photographer’s delight. The image potential is vast: concrete foundations dating back to the early 1900s, old discarded bricks, a small dam, the cement plant smoke stack, park benches overlooking the inlet, remnants of the dock pillars, and the flora and fauna of the region.

March 13th: Reflections. Glass, water, mirrors, or the freshly waxed hood of a new car can all lend to the creation of an excellent “reflection” photograph. Experiment by altering focus from the reflective surface to that of the subject. The resulting images from this technique could provide an interesting diptych, a style used by a Tuesday-Shoot regular.

March 20th: Whiffin Spit Park. Located between the Sooke Basin and Juan de Fuca Strait, the park offers the photographer a wide array of image possibilities. Originally, in the late 1700s, the entrance to the harbour was named Puerto de Revilla Gigedo, for the Viceroy of Mexico. When the Royal Navy carried out a detailed survey in 1846, it was renamed in honour of John George Whiffin, a clerk who served aboard the survey ship, HMS Herald. The Sooke Harbour Fishing and Packing Company once used the land as an industrial site, installing fish-trap pilings, remnants of which still remain. For those who are interested in landscape and seascape photography, be sure to bring along a tripod. Parking is available at the trailhead.

March 27th: Hands. Whether they are working, idle, or playful hands, they can tell an interesting or an inspirational story. As an idea, I’m picturing a pair of hands holding a camera. If you find yourself struggling with this theme, I’m sure someone in the group will lend you a hand.

Some events require registration and a fee may apply. Please check the club calendar for details related to each field trip.

March 2018

Weekend Shoots

by Teri VanWell and Vanessa MacDonald

In March we start getting into warmer weather with the possibility of spring flowers starting to appear. The rivers and waterfalls are still overflowing from the rainy winter season for some amazing photographic opportunities. We have a few field trips scheduled for March but please keep an eye out for other ones being posted.

Here are the currently scheduled field trips for March:

March 3rd: Sooke Potholes Regional Park and Mary Vine Falls. The Sooke Potholes Park features a river canyon with a series of deep, polished rock pools and potholes carved by glacial action into the bedrock of the Sooke River. Mary Vine Falls is quite a spectacular attraction and is located approximately 15 minutes from the main parking lot along a rugged footpath. You will need sturdy shoes and weatherproof clothing for this hike. This will be a great trip for anyone who enjoys photographing flowing sections of river, waterfalls and geological formations. We will spend the morning exploring the potholes and the falls and then meet up at 17 Mile Pub for lunch. Your group leader for this field trip is Bob Law.

March 10th: Gowland Tod Provincial Park. This beautiful park is approximately 30 minutes from downtown Victoria. It is the perfect place to explore and capture some quintessential west coast scenes. There are plenty of moss-covered rocks and trees, ferns, meandering rivers and waterfalls, and it’s right on the edge of Tod Inlet. Sometimes the light streams through the trees with a beautiful effect in the early mornings. This could be a good opportunity to try some daytime long exposures of flowing water or bring your telephoto or macro lenses for close-ups of rain-forest creatures and plants. Your group leader for this field trip is John Clarke.



“Gowland Tod Park”

Continuous Lighting Equipment

by Karl Schoepp

Experimenting with continuous lighting is a wonderful way for photographers of any skill level to begin their journey into the world of lighting. Continuous lighting equipment can be purchased affordably, does not require a large investment, or configuration of the camera or flash menus. Continuous lighting allows the user to learn how to model the light with their subject in advance of the photograph being taken. Being able to see how the light performs in real time allows the user to learn how the light source behaves, shapes and creates shadows. It allows quick and visual adjustment, and fine-tuning.

The most affordable and oldest form of continuous lighting equipment you will find is the incandescent or tungsten-halogen type source. With an incandescent lighting source, the filament of the bulb has electricity running through it and is heated to incandescence (where it emits light). Tungsten-halogen bulbs simply add a pressured chamber with halogen gas to incandescent bulbs to prevent filament decay through heat. Incandescent and tungsten-halogen light bulbs are getting harder to find due to the popularity of LEDs, but still offer many distinctive advantages. These advantages are affordability, high colour rendering index, 3000-3200k white balance, dimmable bulbs, a soft pleasing quality, a warm look, and general tradition.

It is important to understand the basics and safety of electricity when working with continuous lighting. Household circuits in Canada are typically rated for 15 amps, 120 volts. The Canadian Electrical Code requires that we load the circuit breaker to 80% of its rated capacity. Therefore, the maximum current we are allowed to run through a 15-amp circuit breaker is 12 amps. Our maximum wattage is therefore calculated by taking the amperage times the voltage ($12a \times 120v = 1440w$). We must be careful not to exceed 1440w per circuit when using any type of lighting equipment. Different circuits in a residence or business are typically difficult to determine as the electrical code has changed significantly in the last few decades. We can assume that although a room may have multiple plugs, they are typically only on one circuit. As well, wall plugs in common walls may also share the same circuit. Some items that typically have dedicated circuits are: outdoor plugs, counter plugs, microwaves, garberators, washing machines, and electric ranges. Always use GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupters) when working with lighting equipment outdoors or in close proximity to water.

A great starter light of the tungsten-halogen type is a work light. Work lights are typically used in construction and around the house. You can purchase work lights in two forms. The more affordable work lights consist of a version with a ground level stand, and the other version is two work lights on a tripod.

While the first option is the most affordable (\$15-\$20 on sale), it tends to not be practical as you cannot easily adjust the height of the source. The dual tripod version (\$50- \$100) offers easy height adjustment. Some great brands include HDX and Globe Lighting. Wattage is typically 500w or 250w, and I would suggest you buy one that takes a 500w bulb. You always want to start with the highest wattage light that you have available, as you can always reduce light output but cannot add more. Work lights typically must be either bounced or diffused, as they output a hard, unnaturally dramatic looking light. I would recommend staying away from purchasing any type of fluorescent work light, as you are likely to have colour temperature problems. LED units may work but beware of poor colour rendering index, colour temperature problems, and low light output.



Work-light Setup and Image through Diffusion Material

Another affordable lighting source is a China Ball (Chinese lantern) with your light source of choice inside. You will need to purchase a lantern (\$10-\$25) either in Chinatown, online, or at a home decorating store (Pier One, Home Sense, etc.). The lantern should be as large as you deem to be realistic (about 18"-24" is recommended) as the larger the source, the softer the

light will be. Next, you will require something called a pigtail. A pigtail is simply a medium screw base standard household light bulb socket with a plug attached to the other end. The best option to find a pigtail is taking apart a clip light and creating a pigtail. You should ensure that your pigtail is certified for use in Canada before purchasing by checking that it either is CUL, ETL Intertek, or CSA approved.

In addition, you will need a medium screw base bulb of your choice. This could be an incandescent, compact fluorescent, or LED bulb. If using fluorescent or LED, ensure that the bulb is dimmable and designed for still photography or motion picture lighting to achieve proper colour temperature. Household LED and CFL lamps may have colour temperatures of 4000k and appear green in white balance.

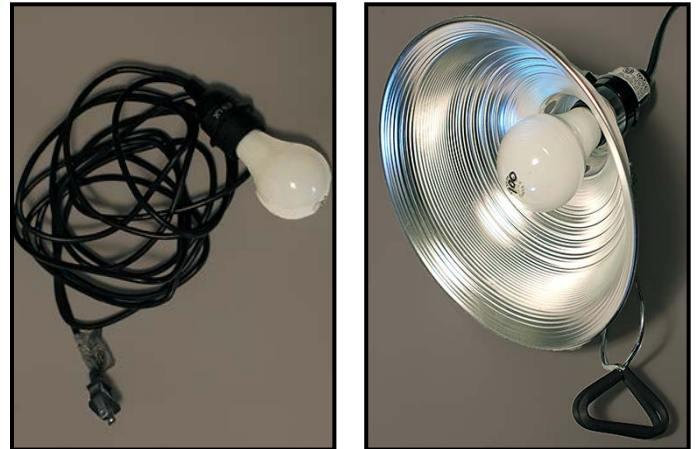
For an optional professional touch, add a dimmer to your China Ball system. A credenza lamp dimmer is both an affordable and compact option for your China Ball. Simply purchase a credenza dimmer that is incandescent, LED, and fluorescent rated at your local hardware store. You can also make a stand for your China Ball by getting a small piece of matte board about 2" x 12", making a circle and taping it together, then putting your China Ball on it. You can attach the China Ball to lighting stands or tape it to chairs etc. by the pigtail using painter's tape.



China Ball Setup and Image

Another great option similar to a China Ball is a clip light. A clip light is essentially a pigtail with a clip for attaching

the fixture to any surface. Clip lights can be purchased at just about any hardware store for about \$15-\$20. They often come with an aluminum reflector which can aid in light output. With a clip light you have two options: a medium screw base PAR type bulb (parabolic reflector) or a Type A (typical household bulb). You could use a PAR type bulb as a "spot light" to give you a hard and high contrast key light or back light. PAR bulbs tend to put out the highest amount of light per watt. You could also equip the fixture with a standard household Type A bulb. Using a Type A bulb would give you, generally, a much more pleasing softer light, but with less intensity. It is typical to use a bulb of a higher wattage in a soft light versus a lower wattage in a direct source. You can always attach diffusion materials to your clip light's reflector if the light is too harsh. This can help create a much larger source as the diffusion material then becomes the source. Clip lights are especially useful for still life, portraits, and general lighting needs. They are extremely portable, and run with little power draw.



Pigtail and Clip Light

Continuous lighting is both an affordable and educational form of lighting equipment. One can learn how light behaves in real time and truly achieve wonderful light modelling for any subject. Practical continuous lighting equipment can be found at most hardware stores and home decorating stores.

Professional equipment is also available for those interested in tungsten-halogen, LED, HMI, and Fluorescent light types. Some good professional brands are Arri, Mole-Richardson, Kino Flo, and Lite Panels. While the cost of professional equipment can be intimidating, the equipment will last a lifetime. Professional equipment is more durable, reliable, safe, controllable, and convenient.

In the end, however, a continuous light is simply just a tool. It makes no difference whatsoever if the lighting equipment is bought from the hardware store or is professional equipment. We must use whatever tools we have available correctly to achieve the results that we desire.

Beginners' Corner

Rule Of Thirds, Or Not

by Josée Ménard

It's a red light. You stop. It's green. You go. It's yellow. Do you burn the light or, safely press on the brakes? Rules. We abide by them, we bend them, we break them. Well, you decide. Was heading to the setting sun location delayed by the tripod search or was it catching every red light? Rules in photography are great guides to abide by and a good risk to take when you feel like bending them, especially in this digital world. With film, we were more careful. So, which rule are we going to make or break? The famous rule of thirds because it is a great one to abide by until you are comfortable to bend it and break it?

This principle of composition has been a favourite of artists for centuries. Beginning with painters, there is now an array of famous cross-disciplinary works and photographic images that await your observations. This vast learning ground has primarily been created with the Rule of Thirds as a guide. The tic-tac-toe framework pleases the eye. It harmoniously distributes key elements along its vertical and horizontal axis while the focal point is usually at one of their intersections. As rigid as these axes seem, none need to be precisely exact; within the realm will suffice.



"Elusive Evening"

The multi-dimensional features of "Elusive Evening" transport the viewer into this image. If your eyes signal confusion, they do not deceive. Cleverly, the bar's key elements were captured reflected onto the curve of the dome and window. Your sight continues on through to the actual opposing shoreline. Meanwhile, the sunset provides perfect evening light to illuminate the bottles' coloured glass and the awaiting clean glasses. Artistic-

ally, the rule of thirds assisted me to complete an elusive composition and vision.

With the tic-tac-toe framework in mind, imaginary horizontal lines are created by the bar's counter below and the glasses in the sky. Meanwhile, the customer's silhouette and the bar's edge illuminated by the rainbow naturally delimit the vertical axis. The top and middle planes display a fictional world in the sky and, at the same time, the lower plane brings us back to reality on the river bank. The riverboat's glass shows raindrops. The dark clouds and the faint rainbow hues tell us a storm has passed.

Facing the main middle area, do we become customers in this elusive bar in the sky? Instinctively, the eyes remain focused on the sunset-lit central area where the mind and imagination allow a story to develop within the four crossing points. It can travel from near the silhouette at the left through to the bartender's area and beyond the dining boat's glass over the darkened waters and sky onto the sunset-lit shoreline trees. This time, the focal point has not been placed at one of the intersections. The rule of thirds axis has been hand stretched to an elevated focal area supported by four anchoring points. To come across such a spontaneous opportunity is very fortunate. Right time, right place, right weather and light conditions.

As you compose your image, use the tic-tac-toe framework to set up your key elements and focal point. Vary their placement within the frame. Choose the one that pleases your eye the best. Review the features of each component to ensure all is good. The focal point is not soft? Is what needs to be soft, soft? Enough room given to the characters facing a side? What about above and below? Anything that doesn't belong? How about the light and shadows? How can they improve your image? As you practice more and more, you will develop a personal checklist that helps you double-check your basics.

Think of the story you are telling. Are you heading in the right direction? What about bending or breaking the rule? Does it have a greater impact? Does it improve your story telling? Are you keeping the viewer's eye circulating with interest? Not fully content? Keep at it. Have you taken advantage of the elements and principles of photography before you? Try a different angle of capture or move a few steps. Are you re-energizing inside? All the pieces come together and voilà! You created a better image. Feels good doesn't it? On the other hand, still facing a roadblock? If so, may be you should try again under different conditions. May be give it some more thought and study. Keep on learning too. Have you attended a VCC SIG or member's night? Take in a workshop.

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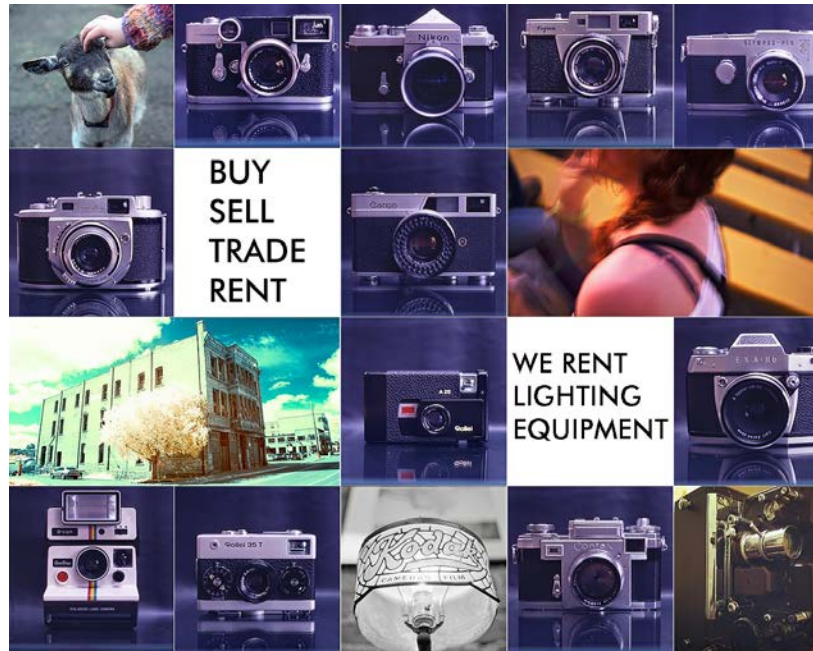
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