Close-Up

Inside:

Living and Working Creatively
Photographing Pets
Why Size Matters
Member Profile: Rick Shapka
New Cards on the Block
Digital Infrared Photography: Part 2
Creative Approaches to Night Photography, Part 2
Beginners Corner: A Splash of Colour
... and more

"Spring is Here" by Normand Marcotte

Victoria Camera Club

March 2016 Volume 69 Number 3

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Victoria Camera Club

Close-Up is the magazine of the Victoria Camera Club,
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Deadline for submissions for the April 2016 issue is March 5th 2016.
Editor, Richard James, e-mail to *newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org*
for submissions or to advertise in *Close-Up*.

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*.

For additional information: please contact:

Membership: *membership@victoriacameraclub.org*
Workshops: *workshops@victoriacameraclub.org*
Field Trips: *fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.org*
Meetings: *meetings@victoriacameraclub.org*
Website: *webmaster@victoriacameraclub.org*
Close-Up: *newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org*
or call Lloyd Houghton, President at 250-580-7154.

What's Inside

Club Calendar and President's Message 4
Living and Working Creatively 5
Photographing Pets 6
Why Size Matters 9
Competitions 10
Member Profile: Rick Shapka 17
New Cards on the Block 19
Digital Infrared Photography: Part 2 20
How I Did It 22
Shoots Around Victoria 23
Creative Approaches to Night Photography, Part 2 24
Beginners Corner: A Splash of Colour 26

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Member Discounts: VCC members can take advantage of discounts offered by several retailers in Victoria. Details are on the members section on our website.

The Victoria Camera Club is a member club of the Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria (CACGV), 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.

Thursday, March 3rd: Competition Night

The February competition results will be presented with one of the judges reviewing selected images. The theme for March is "Industrial." The deadline for submission is March 3rd.

Thursday, March 10th: Presentation Night

Photo-journalist Adrian Lam will describe his personal approach to seeing photographs in urban environments that command attention; catching the essence of a moment or of a person; and choosing the right lighting and lens. The presentation will be made as a series of question and answer sessions using a selection of his images.

Thursday, March 17th: Members' Night

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

Featured Field Trips and Workshops

Catching the Light at Night Field Trip; Intro to Lightroom and Novice Image Review workshops.

Cover image: "Spring is Here" by Normand Marcotte. This photo was taken on a Tuesday morning Field Trip in November 2015. The theme that day was "Street Photography" in preparation for the January 2016 Digital Theme competition.

I took this photo at Fan Tan Alley in downtown Victoria, always a favourite destination on our bi-monthly "walkabouts." I knelt down to put the flowers and bike luggage box at eye level and selected the largest aperture I could get on my lens to limit the depth of field. All Post-processing was done in Lightroom 6, using no plug-ins. I cropped the image in a square format and added a slight vignette in order to keep the viewers eyes on the flowers. Finally, I reduced the luminance noise (due to the high ISO) and sharpened the image. Canon EOS 6D with a 24-105 mm f4L IS USM lens at 55 mm. The camera setting: RAW, ISO: 1000, f4.0, 1/125 sec, no flash.

President's Message

I have been as guilty as most people of taking my camera everywhere and pointing it at everything. In addition to holding up the people I'm with, there are usually a lot of photos on my computer that never really get looked at. Even if they do get some attention, my interest in them is very fleeting. A completely non-photography related video clip I saw recently led me to ask myself a question, "Why do I take photos?"

A bit of reading and thinking over this issue has started to result in a lot less camera use or, for those times when I still can't quite get myself to leave the camera behind, a lot more files not being imported to my computer, a lot of time saved and a lot more satisfaction.

In the introduction to her first solo exhibition in Victoria, Emily Carr said, "No work of real value is produced by an artist unless his hand obeys his mind. The camera has no mind." Emily was using this in support of an explanation for her creative approach to painting, an approach that was not being favourably received by the art community of the time. They expected realistic-looking artwork.

For us, she was right. The camera has no mind. It doesn't know why we stop to look at something. It doesn't know what we want our picture to look like. We have to tell the camera. Similarly with the computer. It can do all manner of things to the image, but not until we tell it what to do. For both pieces of equipment we need to know what it is we want to achieve, work out how to use the equipment to do that, and then tell the equipment to do it.

Further pondering on the question got me thinking about what makes photos special to me. The most special ones bring back memories. Memories of the shoot, the subject matter, or the location. The stronger the memory, the more special the image is to me.

Looking at a photo again triggers the memory. The more special the photo, the stronger the memory. With this in mind, I've been using my special photos to help me identify the places and subjects that are special to me. If I'm not going to be in a place where I know there will be this subject matter that I've identified, the camera stays home nine times out of ten.

So the initial question of "Why do I take photos?" turned into "What photos do I take?" What are your answers to those questions?

Lloyd Houghton, President.

by John McConnell

A challenging subject! The whole approach is really about taking risks, going down the new, inviting, less travelled road which you suddenly see before you and which looks full of promise, fulfillment, learning, excitement, unexpected revelations and maybe an extraordinary opportunity to grow as an artist and a person. So, do we take the new path or do we stay safe and comfortable?

As a member of the Victoria Camera Club, you will be pursuing your creativity through photography. As creative people we move from here to there by sixth sense, floating on a gentle breeze of perception, sometimes (oft times!) unaware of the pot holes and cracks we may encounter on our new path and blissfully unaware of, or unheeding of, the dangers lurking in the darkness.

"Glen Etive"

This is not just about creating a great photograph, painting, poem or sculpture but just as important, it's about living your life creatively. As the great Irish writer W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) said, and wrote a thousand times on the fly-leaf of his books, "For wisdom is a butterfly, and not a gloomy bird of prey."

According to Yeats, my wife and I are most certainly butterflies! In our lives together and in our work we have travelled down many an inviting new path. Many of these paths have brought major changes to our lives and given us the opportunity to explore a wider variety of self-expression than would have otherwise been the case.

I'm happy to say that the gloomy bird of prey has not caught up with us yet. That's not to say that there haven't been potholes and cracks along the way, for we have had our share, but we feel blessed to have been able to live a creative life and see each other's work grow as we headed down those paths less travelled.

The road to excellence is a long one. Indeed it is a road with no end because you can never fully achieve it. Your next creative work must always be better, more perceptive and closer to the truth. It's being on the road that's important, because until you are on that road to excellence, you are on the road to mediocrity and you are sure to be spotted by that "Gloomy Bird of Prey."

Since 1989 I have made my living as an artist in both Canada and Ireland. The greatest influence on my painting has actually been the poetry of the Irish poet laureate Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) who won the Nobel Prize in 1995. I have several letters from Seamus and he gave me the best description of the creative process I have ever heard. Being a poet he put it into nine words.

"Impulse discovers direction, Potential discovers structure, Chance becomes design." *Seamus Heaney.*

My father-in-law, Walter Stoy, now 94 years old, is one of the few photographers who studied with Ansel Adams. Four years ago he encouraged me to add more serious photography to the quiver of my bow. Such encouragement was hard to resist and I have been able, I think, to bring my artist's eye to composition, but the technical aspects of the camera have been my greatest challenge.

"Field of Vision"

In 2014 I went to Scotland where I met a group of photographers who were much more experienced than I. It was challenging company, but a great opportunity for growth. Some of you may have seen my presentation of these images at the club last year. I've included one of them with this article along with a recent painting inspired by a Seamus Heaney poem called "Field of Vision." So, rise to the challenge! Embrace the unknown, explore the unfamiliar. There's little to be lost and much to be gained.

by Herman Surkis

I am not sure why we need a “Photographing Pets” article, since photographing pets is not so different from photographing anything else. If you do wildlife, you can do pets. If you do models or children you can do pets, although pets may be more cooperative. Or not. How can I tell you how to photograph your pet, since I do not know your pet? Your pet could be a pygmy shrew, a cat, a dog, a horse, a 300 kilogram tiger. And let us not forget any number and varieties of fish. Each will need different lighting. Each will need a different point of view and setup. So Google and review the 4,000,000 articles and videos on photographing pets. There, I’m done.

Ok, I will go a little further. I will point out a few things and then I will tell you what gets in my way of getting good images. Lighting decisions are always based on the pet. You can go from a straight table-top setup to a major production with a crew of hundreds. You can do some simple snapshots, which is what most people want, or a complicated examination of the personality and behaviour of your pet. Believe it or not, your pet will have its own personality and behaviour, despite anything stated about the species. Your pet can be the subject of a snapshot, a portrait, a documentary story, or simply part of a beautiful or dramatic image.

“Grumpy” Chameleons tend to curl their tails when annoyed. It was an easy matter to get a more esthetically pleasing picture by annoying it to get him to curl his tail. Avoiding him turning around and biting me was a whole other matter.

You do not need an exotic pet to be worth photographing it. You do need imagination, creativity (almost the same thing), and minimal technical knowledge of your equipment and lighting. We have all seen boring images of incredibly exotic animals, and beautiful images of a common household tabby. So create some beautiful images.

“Three Frogs” The biggest of the frogs is no bigger than size of your thumbnail.

Some standard suggestions, which seem to work for most artistic endeavours:

1. Know your subject. This will help you predict its behaviour and allow some planning for the shoot. Knowing your subject will also help to tell a story.
2. As with children, get down to your pet’s eye level for the images. It is more intimate and dramatic. Alternatively go for a freaky point of view, something not commonly seen.
3. To paraphrase Robert Capa, if your photo is boring, then you are not close enough. Take this with a grain of salt if your pet is potentially lethal.
4. Remember, that to an animal, that huge lens could be a huge eye staring at it, and no animal likes being stared at, as the starer could be a predator looking for dinner or a fight. Let the animal get used to the camera and lens. Let it get used to the sound of the shutter click. Generally you do not want your pet to be reacting to the camera, especially those pets who turn into divas, or constantly photo-bomb.
5. Most animals quickly adapt to flash and will ignore it, however continuous lighting is always good, as long as you do not fry your pet. If it is constantly trying to leave the scene of the action, it is telling you that something is making it very uncomfortable. It is incumbent on you to figure out what the problem is.
6. Treats can work, but the novelty soon wears off.

However depending on the pet, treats may be the only way to get any cooperation to set up the shot.

7. You need to be flexible in your thinking and your set-up. What you want your pet to do, and what it wants to do, are rarely the same thing. Like with children, they usually call the shots. However if you know your pet, you may be able to induce the behaviour and look you want, but only if you know your pet.
8. Catch it unaware. Watch your pet and grab interesting moments in its daily life. This can be at play in the house, the studio, or outdoors. Find a place where it is comfortable and turn it loose. This is not unlike street photography where you concentrate on grabbing a moment that cannot always be predicted.
9. Change your point of view. Different perspectives tell different stories, so mix it up. Go from environmental shots (subject in its environment), to full body, to portraits, to close-ups of an interesting feature.
10. As with all photography, look at the background. A busy background can ruin the story. A plain background can be boring. I cannot tell you what will or won't work for you. Experiment and see what works.

Did I mention...Know your pet? Here is what I find is the major killer for me:

You have all heard this statement "familiarity breeds contempt," and there is a lot of truth to it, although contempt is too harsh, but you get the meaning. I shoot portraits and models, amongst many other things. I do not have a good photo of any ex-girlfriends, and some were models and dancers, but I have great photos of other people's girlfriends. I have had dogs most of my life. I do not have any photos of my dogs that I like. The only reminders I have that are good art are some paintings done by an ex-girlfriend as a gift to me.

"Nero" Are you sure this is my good side?

This is where I tend to fail. Familiarity breeds complacency. Your pet is always around. It can be photographed tomorrow, which never seems to come, and then your pet is gone. Because of the familiarity issue, it never seems to be worth putting in the effort to set up a proper shoot. I have put in more time and effort setting up to shoot other critters than my own. Your pet is commonplace to you unless you keep exotics and so never seems to be worth the effort. This is my greatest obstacle to getting good images of my own pets. Perhaps this is also an issue for you. This is not stuff you will readily find through Google.

Rarely have I heard, "I took too many photos of my pets" (although other viewers may think so), but far too often I have heard, "I wish I had...". When your pet is gone, you will have your memories and maybe some photos to stir those memories, unless you do a Roy Rogers with Trigger. So take those memory helpers.

Images were taken using a simple 2-light, continuous light setup except for the wolf which was a multi-light flash set-up in the studio. The lights were adjusted to suit the subject.

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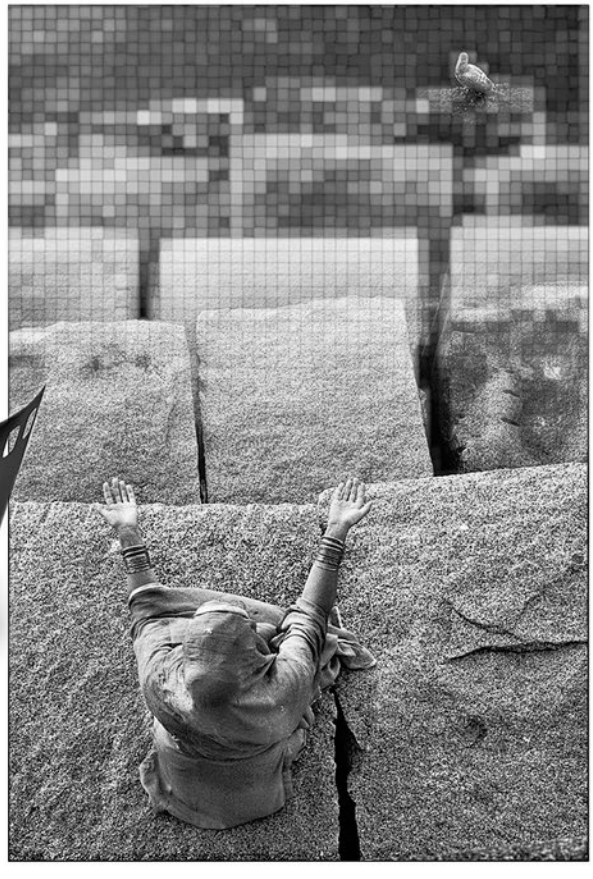

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by Richard James

Now that I have your attention, I'll explain that I'm talking about the size of your image files. First, the short version, then the technical explanation. This article has been inspired by discussion I've had from time to time with various members and at workshops.

The best data for your image file is in the RAW file that your camera sensor captured, even if you saved an in-camera JPEG this is still true. Every time you resize your image the data is interpolated (similar to averaging but a bit better if it's done intelligently) and in this process resolution is lost. This means details of the shape and structure of the subject are gone, irrecoverable, you'll never get them back.

All of your editing should be done on the full-sized image, before cropping or resizing. You then save this image as a "master" from which you can produce images of different crops, sizes and resolution. If you make the mistake of only saving let us say a 1400 pixel wide JPEG, then really all you can use it for is digital display on a projector or a website. [A note for Lightroom users: Since Lightroom doesn't actually edit the image until you export it you could in theory go back and redo it. However, I would suggest that instead of that you make a "virtual copy" and do subsequent changes on that, such as cropping etc.]

This process, using a master image, allows you to easily make different versions of the same image such as an 11" x 17", 300 ppi image to sharpen for inkjet printing for a print competition as well as the 1400 pixel wide JPEG image sharpened for projection and upload to the website for submission and projection on competition night. From your master image you end up with two "specific output" images prepared in the best way for that particular purpose. Each of these can be saved for future use.

What happens if you crop the image? Cropping does not mean resizing in terms of the pixel count for the image. You simply crop (cut off) the parts of the image you don't want and have the pixels left that you do want.

Next, you need to resize it to end up with the correct pixel per inch count for printing on an inkjet printer (typically 300 or 360 ppi) or the correct pixel count for projection (not more than 1400 x 1050 pixels with our projector).

Now that we have got through the basic process we can look at the technical explanation of resizing. As I noted in the second paragraph, resizing means interpolation. For this discussion I will use a typical image size from a 25 megapixel sensor which is approximately 6000 x 4000 pixels. An 11 x 17 print requires 5100 x 3300 pixels to print at 300 ppi. You have essentially two choices: crop it to exactly the pixel count required, or retain more than that number of pixels and resize down to the required number. Let's say we want to use the full image size and reduce it. That's a reduction to 85% of the original pixel count. This means the interpolation will "throw away" information related to three out of every 20 pixels.

Then if we are going to produce a 1400 pixel projection image starting from the original full frame (6000 pixels wide) we're going to use 23% of the pixels, that's throwing away three out of every four pixels.

What does "throwing away" mean? It means the interpolation has to come up with a substitute for any changes in detail in the image. I think you can pretty easily see that if you have a very sharp edge throwing away three quarters of the data about that edge is going to leave it as a rather soft boundary. This is why there is a lot more information in a print than there is in a projected image.

Why do I ask for "full-size" images for publication in *Close-Up* when the image is only going to be 3.3" wide? The answer lies in the way I prepare images as well as the impact of resizing to a smaller size. The process I use emphasizes detail in the full-size image in a way that more detail can be preserved when it is resized and then sharpened for printing or for the PDF version. If all I have to work with is the 1400 pixel image retrieved from the website then you have already thrown away 75% of the data which I cannot recover. If I work from the full-size image I can keep more detail and have a sharper image than I could ever achieve working from a 1400 pixel JPEG (within the limitations of the printing process and your monitor when viewing the PDF). In addition, that JPEG is too large and I have to resize it again to get it down to the correct pixel count. In this process I'd be throwing away an additional 30% of the data. However, what is worse is that the data is even more compromised than if I had worked from the full-size file.

Another issue is that some images require masking and adjustment which can be done more accurately and easily on a full-size image than on a small JPEG image.

Yes, image size is large if you send me a full-size TIF or PSD file. However, I believe the "pain" is worth it in terms of the quality of the images that we can produce. I would always assume you want your images shown in the best light possible.

April Theme Competition

by Pam Irvine

The deadline for entries to the "Shallow Depth of Field" Theme competition is Thursday, April 7th.

Shallow Depth of Field (DoF) is a technique used to focus the viewer's attention on the subject while keeping the background blurred. Floral images often use a shallow DoF to separate the subject flower from the background garden.

The definition of Depth of Field (DoF) is the distance between the nearest and farthest objects in a scene that appear acceptably sharp in an image. With a shallow DoF the distance is small and everything in front of and behind the point you are focusing on will be out-of-focus.

The way to control your depth of field is with the aperture in your lens. A low f-stop or aperture setting of f2.8 indicates a large opening in the aperture which can create a shallow depth of field. Your lens may not go down as low as f2.8 but most lenses will go down to at least f5.6. You will have to set your camera to Manual or Aperture Priority Mode (A or Av) in order to select a low f-stop.

Other factors that also affect the depth of field include your distance from the subject. The closer you are to your subject, the shallower your depth of field becomes. The focal length of your lens also limits your depth of field. If you are using a wide-angle lens (e.g. 35 mm) you will have to get closer to your subject to get a shallow DoF.

This tiny white flower is the only part of the image that is in focus. The rest of the image is out of focus. This was shot with a macro lens that allowed me to get in very close to my subject.

January 2016 Competition Judges

We extend our sincere thanks to the judges for the January Intermediate and Advanced level competitions: Rob d'Estrube, Mike Byrne, Anna Lamarche, Pierre Gauthier and especially Michael Wheatley who stepped in at the last moment. We would also like to thank our in-house Novice Judges for this month: Willie Waddell, Steve Lustig, Caspar Davis, Suzanne Huot and Judy Taylor. All the Club judges have taken the CAPA judging course. All images and judges' comments are available at: *victoriacameraclub.ca/vcccompetitions*.

Rob d'Estrube (Prints): Forty years ago Rob established d'Estrube Photography which became one of Victoria's leading photographic studios. Rob in now "mostly retired" but keeps his hand in with some special projects, personal portraits, outdoor family portraits, bodyscapes, and some light commercial work.

Mike Byrne (Prints): Mike is one of the founders of ClockTower Images in Victoria. Mike has always pursued outdoor activities and, as a natural extension, started to produce outdoor adventure films and videos. Mike worked for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and has been the official sports photographer at many sporting events.

Michael Wheatley (Digital Nature): Michael started taking photographs at 18 and has been a full-time nature photographer for many years. He currently lives in Vancouver. His work has appeared in many magazines.

Anna Lamarche (Digital Open & Theme): Anna Lamarche is a photographer in Kingsville, Ontario. In 2009, Anna co-founded "Shooters Photography Club" which emphasizes sharing and participation in events.

Pierre Gauthier (Digital Creative): Pierre is a longtime and active member of the RA Photo Club in Ottawa. "The proper evaluation of an image is to find the qualities of the various components of an image and to discern how they work together as an expressive and significant whole."

Jim Hoskins (November Theme & Creative): Jim's first photo club was the North Shore Photographic Society where he learned Design and Composition. At present he is a member of the Shuswap Photo Arts Club, where he serves as a judge, does critiques, teaches a bit and mentors. His personal interests are landscape and nature of all kinds, but he will do photo-journalism and portraits if given a chance.

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Advanced Monochrome Print - 3rd
"Grasslands Rainstorm" by Don Peterson

Judge's comments: I like this scene a lot. I like the composition and the sense of immersion that one has when viewing it. I yearn for an opportunity to see what is behind all of the buildings and appreciate the rest of the landscape and so that angst partially works for the enjoyment of the scene. The style suggests that you want us to really imagine ourselves standing and being one with the scene and so there is a slight mismatch here. The print looks rather scratchy but close examination showed that these scratches were the raindrops mentioned in the title. All in all, well done and congratulations.

Advanced Digital Open - 1st
"Great Grey Owl" by Mike Wooding

Judge's comments: The image conveys a good story, an excellent capture. Wonderful separation of feathers, sharp eye focus, nice composition, great bokeh. Kudos to the maker.

Advanced Digital Nature - 3rd
"Puffin Buffet" by Bob Gray

Judge's comments: The image conveys a good story, with good use of colours. An excellent image, great composition and story.

Advanced Digital Theme - 1st
"Tres Mujeres, Havana" by Carole Valkenier

Judge's comments: This image conveys a good story with good use of colours. Great story, especially the cigar smoker. Nice candid, good focus and exposure. Red ties the subjects together nicely.

Advanced Nature Print - 1st
"Gliding Home" by Leah Gray

Judge's comments: The image conveys a good story. This is a fabulous image with great impact that speaks volumes. Technically, the image is superior with wonderful contrast, beautifully soft ranges of white, and tack sharp. The pose is excellent.

Advanced Digital Creative - 1st
"The Dunes of Death Valley" by Ove Christensen

Judge's comments: A strong composition where all elements play a proper proportional and significant role in the composition and story. Enough sky to give the mountains context and enough mountains to give the valley context. The foreground sand and dead vegetation against the rising dunes makes a clear and dramatic statement. The surreal filters and layers applied complete this very strong dramatic statement.

Advanced Open Print - 2nd
"Celestial Sentinel" by Jonathan Adams

Judge's comments: A great exercise, well done, a tricky shot to pull off as well as you have here. All of the values are technically spot on. I think you've done a super job and you are to be congratulated. I think a lot of walls could be adorned with this image.

Intermediate Digital Theme - 1st
"City Birds" by Peter Koelbientner

Judge's comments: A lovely street scene with great lighting and shadow play. A perfect candidate for sepia toning.

Intermediate Open Print - HM
"Ready for Pick-Up" by Cindy Stephenson

Judge's comments: I like the flow of where your eyes go and return and therefore the general composition. I find that the centre of interest for me fluctuates between the roll in the immediate foreground and the trees in the upper background. Well done.

Intermediate Nature Print - 1st
"Ice Crystals" by Steve Smith

Judge's comments: From a technical point of view, an excellent print, sharp with good tones and well-handled highlights and shadows. Good and creative composition. Strong impact gained from high contrast and creative composition.

Intermediate Digital Nature - 1st
"Surf's Up" by Lorna Zaback

Judge's comments: This image conveys a good story with good use of colours. A simple but very effectively composed dramatic image.

Intermediate Monochrome Print - 2nd
"Blue Heron in the Morning Fog"
by Carol Christensen

Judge's comments: I rather like this image as a fine art piece more than seeing it as a standard photograph in black and white. So I am more inclined to think of this as an interpretive fine art image. If we play it that way then there really are no rules as to what the tonal values should be. I can easily enjoy the unusual tonal range and the rather dark countenance of the scene and it could really be a lovely print especially if printed on watercolour paper making it look like a very interpretive photograph. I think it would play well on any number of walls. Congratulations and well done.

Intermediate Digital Creative - 2nd
"Painted Lady" by Richard Willacy

Judge's comments: This image shows good use of colours, a pleasant choice of colour tones which harmonizes well with the subject and creates a painterly water colour ethereal flower world.

Novice Digital Open - 1st
"Baby's First Christmas" by Richard Letourneau

Judge's comments: Tells a great story and the soft focus Black-and-White works well for this image. Nice composition. Well done.

Intermediate Digital Open - 1st
"Times Square" by Richard Marshall

Judge's comments: Good use of colours in this image, a great street scene. A tad over-saturated but shows the vibrancy of the scene.

Novice Digital Nature - 2nd
"Plummeting Pelican" by Rea Casey

Judge's comments: This images conveys a good story. Great capture of this animal, good composition with diagonal flight pattern heading straight for the corner! Slight catch-light in eye adds to this shot.

Novice Digital Theme - 1st
"Conversation" by Graeme Weir

Judge's comments: This image conveys a good story, a great capture typifying "street photography." Well exposed and focused. Good job!

Novice Open Print
"Cedar Waxwing" by Daria Yu

Judge's comments: This image conveys a good story, with good use of colours. Well composed image of bird in natural environment; good DoF. Nicely printed.

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CONTINUING STUDIES

Rick and spouse Donna Christie recently relocated from North Vancouver to Oak Bay and joined the VCC.

I had visited the club many times over the last few years as a CAPA VP, then as President. We joined the club last October and continue to be impressed with the friendliness of the Club and the many activities provided. We look forward to meeting many more members.

Serious photography for me began about fifteen years ago. Although I had been using various Nikon SLRs for many years, in 2002 I enrolled in diploma programs both at Focal Point (photography), and UBC (art history).

"Sunset at Old Woman Beach"

The Focal Point program provided the "knowledge to become a good photographer," while the UBC course provided some "artistic and historical context" with its academic study of paintings, photographs, sculpture and architecture. So began my journey through photography.

When I started the program I was using film to produce slides and print images in the darkroom. By 2004, I had switched to digital capture using a Nikon D70. Remember those 6 megapixel cameras?

Considering myself to be a life-long learner, I continue to read about and study photographers, their images, and attend their workshops. I have taken workshops with many fine photographers including Freeman Patterson, André Gallant, Tony Sweet, Joe McNally, and recently with Eddie Soloway. I have learned something from each of them. Sometimes it is more technical, such as lighting with McNally. Sometimes it is visual or imaginative, with Patterson, or motivational, with Soloway.

Ideas come from both instructors and fellow participants. Some advice that I have put to good practice includes: It is me, not the gear that creates an image; create and crop my image in camera, not at the computer; make the picture for yourself, not anyone else; if I am not excited about the resulting image or print in front of me, why would anyone else be?

Producing a great image is like playing a great game of tennis; it takes time and practice. It takes great light to make a great photo, but great photos can be made in many different light conditions.

Although deciding not to specialize in a specific genre of photography, I have gravitated to landscape, abstract and travel images. You can see some of my work at *rickshapka.smugmug.com*.

My camera equipment is a full-frame Nikon system (D4, D800E), including FX lenses. The use of two bodies lets me minimize lens changes (to reduce sensor dust). I use polarizers and ND filters for my landscape photography.

I decided that I wanted "control" of the process from beginning to end. I purchased an Epson printer, attended seminars, did much reading, and learned about printing and paper selections. Although not for everyone, I very much enjoy this aspect of photography.

I was a volunteer for about 4½ years with CAPA, initially as VP, then as President. My personal interest in joining this Canadian photographic association was the challenge of change that the board offered. I had worked with many organizations that had to adapt to challenges in a changing market place. We all know how change has affected photography; think of DSLRs, iPhones and selfies! The most enjoyable part of my time on the CAPA board was meeting fellow members, and developing some wonderful friendships as a result of visiting, presenting or judging at clubs.

"Snow Birds"

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by John Roberts

Over the years, there have been quite a few memory card types available to us, and some were flash-in-the pan types, such as XD that was used in some FujiFilm and Olympus cameras, MemoryStick, that was used only in Sony cameras, and all the variants of that card, MemoryStick Pro, MemoryStick Pro Duo. And of course, we cannot ever forget the SmartMedia, with its wafer thin design, and a top capacity of 128mb. Yup, 128 megabytes!

Yet, throughout all of this madness, there have been two constants in our lives, Compact Flash (CF) and Secure Digital (SD).

One of the smartest things, in my mind, has been that many of the manufacturers have more recently adopted one or both of those memory card types, across the board. And in the last few years, the CF or SD (SDHC, SDXC) have become both higher capacity and with faster read/write speeds.

The reason the cards need to be faster is that, if you are shooting sports or birds, you need the fast write speed for burst shooting; or if you are using high definition video, for higher frame rates. HD video will use upwards of 30mb/second when set to 1080p, and the new 4K cameras will use 120 mb/second. So in order to keep writing for longer burst length, or higher definition video (since there are rumours of 8K video coming out in the near future) you will need that speed, or more.

While CF and SD have been serving us very well for many years now, they are starting to top out in memory size, and the speed at which they are able to write.

Enter some new kids on the block, the Sony XQD card, and the new Lexar Cfast 2.0.

Cfast 2.0 will not fit a CF card slot, and vice versa; they are totally different cards, I have heard some people ask if they could get a Cfast 2.0 and put it into a camera with a CF card slot. No, you cannot.

For the Sony XQD cards, there are currently only a few cameras that are compatible with them, and all of those are Nikon cameras at the moment. I mean at this time, not even Sony uses these cards in any of their devices. That said, the speed that these cards can read/write is insane. Recently I had an opportunity to play with the new Nikon D500 for a few minutes. It had a XQD 64gb 2933x speed card, and I set the camera for RAW and Continual High Speed mode, then held my finger on the shutter release waiting for the camera to slow down. I wanted to have it just slow down even in the slightest. I could not do it at all. It took about 200 photos in a row, and never paused in the slightest. Yes, the camera was set to RAW, and, yes the Nikon sales rep was looking at me with a certain disdain doing this to their camera.

The same can be said for the new Lexar CFast 2.0. At this time only the brand new Canon 1Dx mk II can use this card, and while I have not seen this camera/card in action yet, I am hoping to soon. But from what I have read about this card we should expect similar results to the XQD for Cfast 2.0 cards. High speed, ultra fast read/write speeds.

Personally I do not currently have any investment in either of these card formats, so I am not too concerned about which one of these cards becomes adopted by all the manufacturers, but I want one of these card formats to become the new standard with all the manufacturers. I am going to say the Sony XQD, just because I feel we owe it to them after the whole Betamax debacle.

The XQD cards are larger than SD cards, but smaller than CF's, so it should not be too hard to start putting them into cameras that are still nice and compact.

I would really like to see all of the professional cameras start to use one of these cards. The sooner that more manufacturers jump on board with either one of these cards, the sooner they become mainstream and the sooner the prices of these cards will start to come down. Right now if you want a 128gb 2933x card, be prepared to spend quite a bit on it. Our dollar is certainly not helping that situation right now either.

Once other high-end cameras start using these cards, then the usual trickle-down effect will happen, and soon enough all cameras will start to use the faster card type.

I really do not care which one of these cards becomes the victor, just that I want one to become the clear victor over the other, as a standard card type that all manufacturers use. That is just best for us all, price wise, plus more card manufacturers will produce them and start putting more R&D into them.

If you have any questions, email me at *jrphotography-bc@icloud.com*.

by Richard Webber and Graham Budd

Welcome to the world of making invisibility visible, an alternate means of visual expression. In this, our second instalment, we'll provide an overview about how to take infrared pictures with a filter and how to shoot infrared with a converted DSLR.

B/W conversion from Super-Colour filter

Option #1: Using an IR filter over the lens

Digital IR images captured in black and white are virtually identical to their film-based counterparts. There are a few things to be aware of when shooting a digital IR image. You can't shoot a digital infrared image with a normal camera unless you are using a filter. Shooting with an external filter also means you're going to need to use very long shutter speeds and hot spots can be problematic.

Test your camera for IR sensitivity

Cameras have a filter in front of the sensor that fully or partly prevents infrared light from contaminating the image. To determine how sensitive your camera is, point a TV remote controller at the lens and press a button. If you can view the illuminated light on the camera's LCD, or if you can photograph it, the camera should be sensitive enough to record IR with the use of an IR filter.

IR Filters

If your camera demonstrates any sensitivity to IR light, buying an IR filter that attaches to the front of your camera lens is a great option. The IR filter prevents nearly all visible light from passing through while only allowing infrared light to strike your camera's sensor. IR filters vary in price depending on the size of the filter and the specific portion of the infrared spectrum they address. The main difference between the filters is how colours are rendered.

The IR filter you use should block as much light as possible below 700 nanometres, while transmitting light in the 700-1200 nanometre infrared range. One of the best filters available is the Hoya R72 IR filter. This cuts a broad spectrum of the IR range, is economical, and produces excellent IR images. The largest lens you use for IR will determine the size of the filter, and in turn, the cost (use a step-down ring for smaller lenses). These filters are very dark so you need to adapt the way you shoot because you can't see through the viewfinder once the filter is attached.

How to Photograph with an External IR Filter

If you are using a screw-on infrared filter considerations like exposure, focusing and composition are more difficult compared to an IR converted camera, but nothing that can't be overcome with practice. The process is similar to taking a long exposure image.

1. Use a tripod. In order to ensure maximum stability, use a cable release or self-timer and mirror lockup if your camera offers that feature.
2. Compose and focus prior to attaching the IR filter. You need to do this because the camera can't "see" the scene with the IR filter on and therefore can't focus properly. Once desired focus is achieved, switch to manual focus.
3. Aperture: f8 to f16 to compensate for the slight shift in focus characteristic of IR photography. If your lens has an IR focus mark, then you can also use this to adjust your focus.
4. In order to prevent lens flare, use a lens hood and position your lens at least 90 to 180 degrees relative to the position of the sun.
5. Set the ISO to 400.
6. Turn off long exposure noise reduction. You can apply noise reduction during post-processing.
7. Attach an IR filter to your lens.
8. Block out the viewfinder to ensure that no stray light can enter the back of the camera.
9. Exposure: This requires a trial and error approach. Initially, try a shutter speed of 30 seconds, take the shot and check your histogram. Adjust your exposure as necessary. Consider bracketing your shots. Different exposures will give different moods.
10. White Balance: You need to create a custom white balance or all your IR images will appear red out of the camera. Take a picture of a grey or white card

with the filter on. Make sure that direct sunlight is hitting the card.

If you're just starting out, buying a filter is a great way to experiment as it allows you to see the IR effect before jumping in and having a camera converted.

Option #2: Using a Converted Camera

Shooting with a camera converted to IR has many advantages. The requirement for tripods and long shutter speeds and higher ISO's, typical when using a screw-on filter are not required, and most users will experience a shooting workflow similar to that using a normal DSLR.

Before sending a camera to be converted there are two key considerations. You must first decide whether to submit a fixed lens camera such as a point-and-shoot or one with interchangeable lenses such most DSLR's and many mirrorless models. Each system has its advantages and certain subjects look better using a particular type of conversion.

Traditional cameras can be focused accurately using modern auto-focus systems. IR light on the other hand, is not visible and does not respond accurately when using auto-focus so manual focus using the optical viewfinder or live view is a must for acquiring sharp images. It is important to note that using higher-quality lenses is no guarantee of better results. The camera and lens sensitivity to IR light and their ability to avoid hotspots is paramount. Often cheap kit lenses outperform their expensive cousins in this area. Point-and-shoot cameras with a fixed or zoom lens are often a good choice when getting started.

Alternatively, you might consider using one wider prime or zoom when selecting the DSLR option. Note that if your camera has an auto sensor cleaning function, it will be permanently disabled after conversion.

In both instances, the lens will be calibrated along with the camera during the conversion process making for a nice all-in-one solution.

There are many resources available on the Internet that review the suitability of particular cameras and lenses for IR use, so be sure to check them out. A great place to start is *www.lifepixel.com*.

Once you have decided which camera to convert, ask yourself what subjects you like to shoot to help you decide which filter to buy. Many traditionalists choose a B&W filter that produces the high contrast, dark skies and glowing foliage seen in many fine art galleries, while others prefer to expand their creativity by allowing selective colours to bypass the filter. But remember that black and white versions can be produced in Photoshop.

So your new converted camera has just arrived and you are about to head out for your first shoot. If you selected a black-and-white filter here are a few quick tips to help you get started.

Image as shot with Super Colour Filter

For best results choose a bright sunny summer day and select a landscape with plenty of grass and green foliage. Set your aperture between f8 and f11, ISO 100 - 200 and allow your camera to meter the scene normally. Be sure to include the sky as part of your composition and don't forget to remove a UV filter if you have one attached. Using manual focus or live view, take a test shot and check your histogram. It is not uncommon for your meter to underexpose the scene by stop or more, so adjust your exposure compensation accordingly. Shoot different subjects to gain experience in seeing the world and IR.

If you selected a color filter an extra step or two are required. By far the biggest challenge for those new to IR involves correcting the white balance. If possible, set your camera to shoot both in RAW and JPEG or you may not see the results of the following step on RAW files when viewed in Lightroom or your RAW converter. Using either live view or manual focus, take a test shot of the grass and use it to create a custom white balance. Check your manual if you're not sure how to do this. Your goal is to take the in-camera image with its pink cast and render it more pleasing to the eye. Do not expect perfect results from this process. Adjusting precise white balance on the RAW files in post-processing is more complex and will be the subject of the last article in this series. That said, with practice you should be able to get very pleasing results.

In the next and final instalment we will discuss processing infrared images.

Mudflats

by Cindy Stephenson

I took this image during a one-week photo workshop with Freeman Patterson and André Gallant in St. Martins, New Brunswick last September.

We started each day with a one-hour lecture by Freeman, followed by a three-hour session in the field with either Freeman or André. After lunch, we had a lecture by André, time to process our images from the morning shoot, and to choose three images for them to critique.

I took this image after André's lecture on panning which is a technique you can use to convey motion, emotion and dynamism. Had I taken this image using a faster shutter speed, it would have been a more realistic record of what I was seeing, however, it would not have conveyed how I felt looking out on a small island just off the shore that morning.

He urged us to start by practicing with moving vehicles to get the knack of it. Find a spot with a nondescript background that you can use as a backdrop. A moderate zoom lens (70-200 mm) works well, use shutter priority and a shutter speed of 1/20 second to start. Using shutter priority your camera will adjust the aperture and ISO so the image is properly exposed. Turn off IS/VR on your lens or camera body.

My subject in this image is simply a horizontal pan of the shoreline. I selected shutter priority, slowed the shutter speed down to 1/8 second, composed the scene, and started panning, first to the left and then to the right. I pressed the shutter midway through each pan. André recommends taking 12 images in a row and then reviewing them on your camera's LCD monitor.

Tuscan Morning

by John Clarke

Last year, my wife Gail and I, spent a week in the beautiful town of Anghiari, Tuscany. I researched the surrounding area to find some interesting subjects. I packed as much of my gear as possible, including a small tripod.

We could see the surrounding valley from the top floor of our house, and I saw the beautiful images I could create. I awoke before sunrise and walked down to the top of the town wall to experience the start of a Tuscan September morning. I was taken by the silky beauty of the soft morning mist and pillowy smoke rising from chimneys.

I took numerous test shots to find my favourite composition. I reviewed my images later that day to determine the best exposure, ISO and shutter speed. I wanted my shot at ISO 100 with a small aperture and long exposure. Being early in the morning with low light, I knew I needed my tripod (well worth the suitcase space!).

Ready with an image in my mind, I awoke early each day hoping for ideal weather. On the third day, I had it, clear morning skies with a soon rising sun. I took my gear down to the top of the town wall. Having done numerous test shots, I was able to set up quickly. Using the tripod, I composed my shot and used manual focus. I turned off image stabilization, and using my cable release, I started shooting.

With all of my preparation, I was able to capture images that I had envisioned in my mind and I only needed to make a few adjustments in Lightroom. Overall I was pleased with the process and final result. I only wish I had placed that much effort into other images I created. Next time!

Tuesday Shoots

by Wayne Swanson

March 8th: Only Natural

Hey, man, this is the concrete jungle, habitat for office workers and shoppers. Where do you find "only natural" in this environment? Maybe you should think of the pigeons or gulls who spend so much time in urban areas. What about the harbour seals that cruise the Inner Harbour? They may not contribute to the local economy, but they do persevere in the urban core.

Of course, if you prefer a more natural setting to the metropolitan oasis among the office towers, head over to Beacon Hill or another park where some natural areas are preserved. You may be able to find some wild flowers in a Garry Oak meadow. Wherever you go, it will be your power of observation that will be tested rather than your camera skills.

"Cruising the Inner Harbour" by Wayne Swanson

March 22nd: Shallow Depth of Field

Remember when you first took up photography, you learned about depth of field. Your objective is to highlight a sharp subject by blurring the foreground and/or background using your lens aperture and focal length. Remember the wider the aperture, the shallower the depth of field. Thus, f2.8 has a much shallower depth of field than f22.

There is an inverse relationship between depth of field and focal length, the smaller the focal length, the greater the depth of field. Using an 18 mm lens gives you a greater depth of field than an 85 mm lens. Armed with these basic concepts, you can experiment to get the image that effectively uses a shallow depth of field.

Weekend Shoots

by Steve Smith and Rea Casey

March 5th: Steveston Cannery and Boatyard

Join VCC member, Richard Webber, on a tour of one of his favourite photography venues. We will catch the 7am ferry and then drive to Steveston to visit two National Historic Sites: the Gulf of Georgia Cannery and Britannia Shipyards. The Cannery features interactive exhibits including a canning line and herring reduction plant. The Britannia Shipyards, just a short walk along the boardwalk, also dates to the late 1800s and features stilt houses, boatyards (sometimes working), bunkhouses and stores. You will have access to both the interiors and exteriors of most of the buildings. In addition, there is plenty to photograph in Steveston itself which features old-time storefronts, a public fishing wharf, trollers and of course the Fraser River. If you are adventurous, you might head for the beaches at Garry Point Park or the London Heritage Farm. This trip promises opportunities to practice in all sorts of photographic genres including nature, street, architectural and landscape and should appeal to all levels of photographers. There are likely to be many subjects that will fit the competition theme for April, shallow depth of field.

March 19th: Salt Spring Island

Stay close to Victoria but feel that you have travelled far by coming on our field trip to Salt Spring Island. We will meet on board the 9 am ferry sailing from Swartz Bay arriving at Fulford Harbour at 9:35 am. In Fulford Village we will meet up with Simon Henson, a club member and Salt Spring resident. Simon will be the leader for this field trip. Our photographic subjects will include farm buildings, farm animals, orchards, forest trail, seascapes, rocky shoreline, coves, quirky island buildings, meadows and over-wintering waterfowl. Bring a wide angle lens for landscapes, a telephoto for animals and birds, a close-up lens for plants and detail and a Goldilocks lens for every subject that is not too big and not too small but is just the right size.

Relaxation is the Salt Spring mantra. True to this principle, our beaches have easy access, drive times to our main locations at Ruckle and Burgoyne Bay parks will be short. In between locations, enough time will be set aside for a pleasant lunch in Fulford Village where there are also buildings and stores with great character that may be captured by our cameras.

by Sue Ferguson and Kris Foot

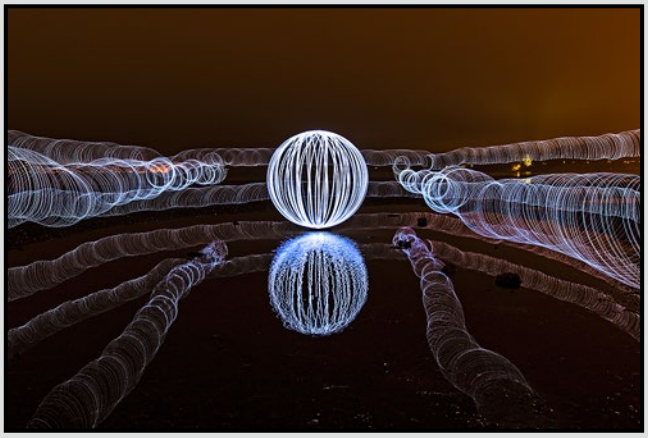
For the second instalment in our Creative Night Photography series, Kris and I set out on a five-day light painting marathon in early January. Fortunately weather conditions, although frosty, behaved and we had complete success with the project. Many hours were spent standing in water or hanging out in abandoned buildings creating works of "light art" until two and three in the morning. It was cold, but the results were definitely worth the effort.

Last month we wrote about the process of "Spinning," now we are delving into the world of "Lightpainting". Lightpainting or "Light Art" is a genre of its own and popular on a large scale in Europe and Asia.

Two people who have worked relentlessly to bring "light art" to the forefront of the photographic stream are Sergey Churkin and Jan Leonardo. They realized there were pockets of incredibly creative light artists around the world but there was no communal place for them to connect and share their work and ideas.

To this end, in 2011, Light Painting World Alliance was created and is managed and owned by Sergey. LPWA is an international guild of established and emerging artists. Its mandate is to promote light painting as an art form, provide a platform for sharing of ideas and learning, as well as to promote the work of the members. The Alliance currently manages international and worldwide competitions.

World-renowned Fine Art Photographer and Lightpainter, Jan Leonardo of "Light Art Photography", created "The International Light Painting Awards" in 2013. This was the world's first large-scale light painting competition and continues to be a huge success.



"Floating Light"

"The Secret Room"

Where spinning is more of an activity (albeit creative), lightpainting is now internationally recognized and highly valued as an art form. Concepts are generally choreographed and staged beforehand (or sometimes on location). Painters work with natural and arranged scenes with lights and tools to create beautiful, artistic effects.

The sky is the limit as far as creativity goes, but it can start as easily as drawing or writing on a wall with a flashlight. The initial techniques are relatively simple, although eventually, it takes skill, patience and spatial awareness to create a masterpiece.

Camera equipment is similar for all forms of night photography. A camera that can be set to bulb mode with a shutter lock system (cable release, remote control app, duct tape etc.) and a tripod. For lenses, we used the Canon 16-35 mm f2.8 L on my 5Ds. For night work and long exposures, many different lenses could be used.

It is important to learn to use your equipment before you begin working in the dark. Know how to make adjustments on your camera by feel rather than visually.

Set your lens on "Manual" and have someone illuminate your location where the painting will be and focus on that point. Learn to focus using the LED display and its zoom feature. Once shooting starts, no lights (outside of the plan) should be turned on for any reason.

White balance settings are a personal choice and we use either auto or tungsten. With shooting in RAW, you can easily adjust your WB in post-processing.

Camera settings vary depending on darkness. With the shutter open, timing is pretty much infinite and some projects can take up to an hour. For our outdoor sessions, our aperture settings were f6.3 to f8 and ISO from 100 to 250. Shutters were open anywhere from 120 to

about 500 seconds depending on the light intensity and complexity of the shoot.

With laser shots, we used smoke to enhance the beams, so aperture settings were around f3.5 and exposure time about 230 seconds. For indoor, smokeless projects, aperture settings were about f7 at ISO at 160 and exposures 370 seconds.

Headlamps should never be worn, but kept in pockets. A miscast beam will destroy a shot (or best case scenario, just blind your buddies). During the shoot, you'll need to know how to deal with situations by feel or exit the scene in the dark to fix the issue. It's important to know your working space before the lights go out. Your sight will adjust if there is ambient light, but in cases of absolute darkness (i.e. inside buildings) we pace everything out and set markers (such as stones) on the ground and go by memory, voice, and feel once shooting starts.

Try to wear dark clothing to avoid reflections. We wear masks (balaclavas) to add an effect, and so our faces do not show up in the final product. Always think about safety in your surroundings, and have a plan. Temperatures drop, so bring layers of clothing, and wear good hiking boots as the ground can become slippery in the damp.

Kris wore hip waders for some of the shots during this project as we were working in tide pools and in the ocean. Plan to spend many hours in wet and cold conditions.

It may seem like a lot of work and preparation, but it is worth it. When you see the results of a well planned painting on your LCD screen, the feeling of artistic accomplishment is unparallelled.

To try this on your own, start by tracing the outline of an object with a flashlight or writing with a laser writer or pen.

By affixing Electroluminescent (EL) wires, or a strand of lights to a piece of dowelling, you have a "light bar". You can even attach these to a drill for a creative effect. Designs are easily obtained and can be found by searching "light painting tools" online.

A light tube can be created with a transparent tube and taping a flashlight in one end and a mirror in the other.

EL wires and fibre optics can be used to create a coloured smoke effect, or wrapped around objects for props. Search EBay for battery operated LEDs. Small LED lights that you can buy at a dollar store can be fixed

"The Watcher"

to moving objects and instruments for interesting light trails. I also picked up a few LED equipped dog leashes and collars for our collection. We also use astronomy lasers (carefully) and smoke emitters (with caution) for effects.

We built some tools and also bought a few. *Light Painting Brushes.com* was very supportive and generously provided some drawing attachments for this project.

"Light Art" is now an internationally recognized art form. If you would like to learn more or become involved, *Light Painting World Alliance*, *Light Painting Photography.com* and *Light Art Photography* are great resources.

Night photography, whatever the style, is alluring, ethereal and addictive. Although painting takes time and planning, there is nothing so rewarding as collaborating on a concept shoot with friends and then heading out and creating a magical work of art.

Lightpainting is yet another way of bringing us together to experience the joy of photography. We are united by our passion for creativity and inherent curiosity to learn new things. Night photography is challenging on many levels, but it also pushes us outside of the borders of mainstream thinking, and sometimes, that is where the greatest moments of creativity are born. Most of all it is about fun, laughter and friendship, and creating wonderful memories with the people we care about.

We hope this article has inspired you to try this wonderful style of photography. Have fun and be safe out there!!

Disclaimer: This article is intended as a story with an educational component. We are not accountable for anything that happens as a result of your use of these techniques.

A Splash of Colour

by Nancy MacNab

While it has been a mild winter, we have still seen our share of dark, dull, dismal, drizzly days over the past few months. With spring comes the renewal of colour as the cherry blossoms display their delicate pastels and the spring flowers contribute their splashes of welcome reds, blues and yellows.

The use of colour in your photographs can make or break them. A light or bright colour in the wrong place can distract your viewer from your intended subject. On the other hand, colours can also be used to emphasize or direct attention to a specific part of your image. For example, to show a sense of scale, a person wearing a red jacket standing beside one of the massive trees of Cathedral Grove will show the sheer size, and by implication, the age of the tree.

A colour that appears to be out of place amongst the rest of the colours in the photo will attract attention. This could be a bright colour in an image of otherwise soft colours, a dark spot in an otherwise light image, or the opposite, a light place in an otherwise dark photo. Using such splashes of colour strategically can add impact and direct the viewer's eye to your subject, or it can distract them.

Your feelings can be influenced through the use of colour. This is demonstrated in the phrases we use: sunny disposition, feeling blue, green with envy, or red haze

"Red Chairs at Takakkaw Falls"

"Blue Columbines"

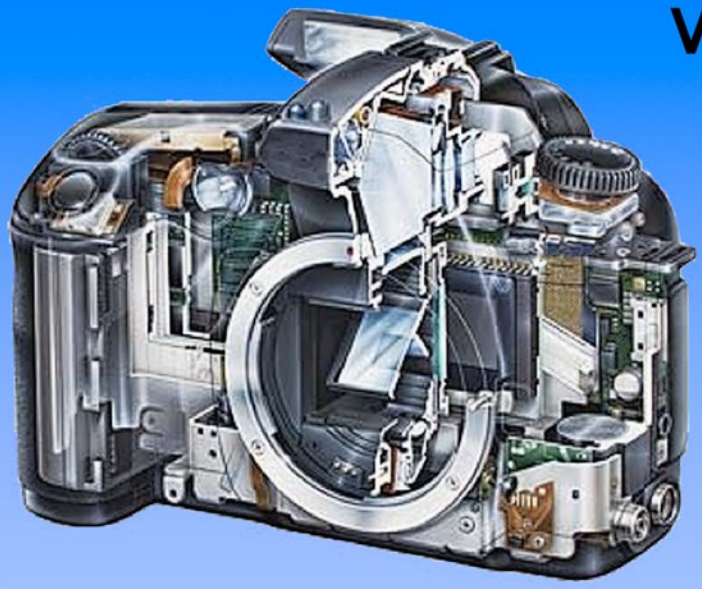
of rage. How you feel about a bouquet of white roses is probably different from how you feel about one of yellow roses, or red ones. Would you sleep as comfortably in a room painted bright orange?

Soft, ethereal, pastel shades tend to suit delicate, fragile subjects such as flowers, or the peacefulness of a misty landscape, or the innocence of youth. Darker colours tend to promote an impression of power, whether it is a CEO wearing a dark business suit or a black bear. Imagine photographing a combat-ready soldier, machine gun at the ready, dressed in a pastel pink uniform! Somehow, the strength and power of that soldier would be lost.

When shooting macro images or using a shallow depth of field, background colours lose the definition of being identifiable and become amorphous shapes of colour. Watch out for the light or bright ones that blossom in an unexpected place, and ensure they are located where they can emphasize and enhance your subject. You may need to change your camera's position slightly, or increase the depth of field in order to decrease the size of that bright spot to make it less distracting.

Colours can change depending on the light. The warmth of early morning or evening light will give a different effect to the coolness of shade or an overcast day. The harsh black shadows of midday light can be softened by a cloudy sky, making the scene you dismissed as being too contrasty into one worth photographing.

As you watch spring burst into colour over the next few months, plan how you are going to make use of those colours to emphasize, define, contrast and attract attention to your subjects. Look out for the distractions and move them to form a better part of your composition. Careful use of colour can make your next photo a winner.



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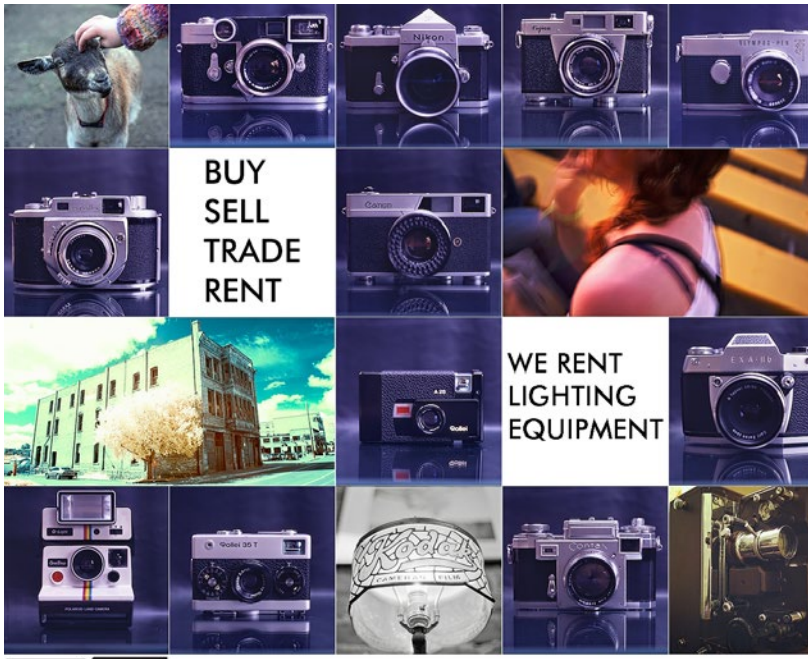

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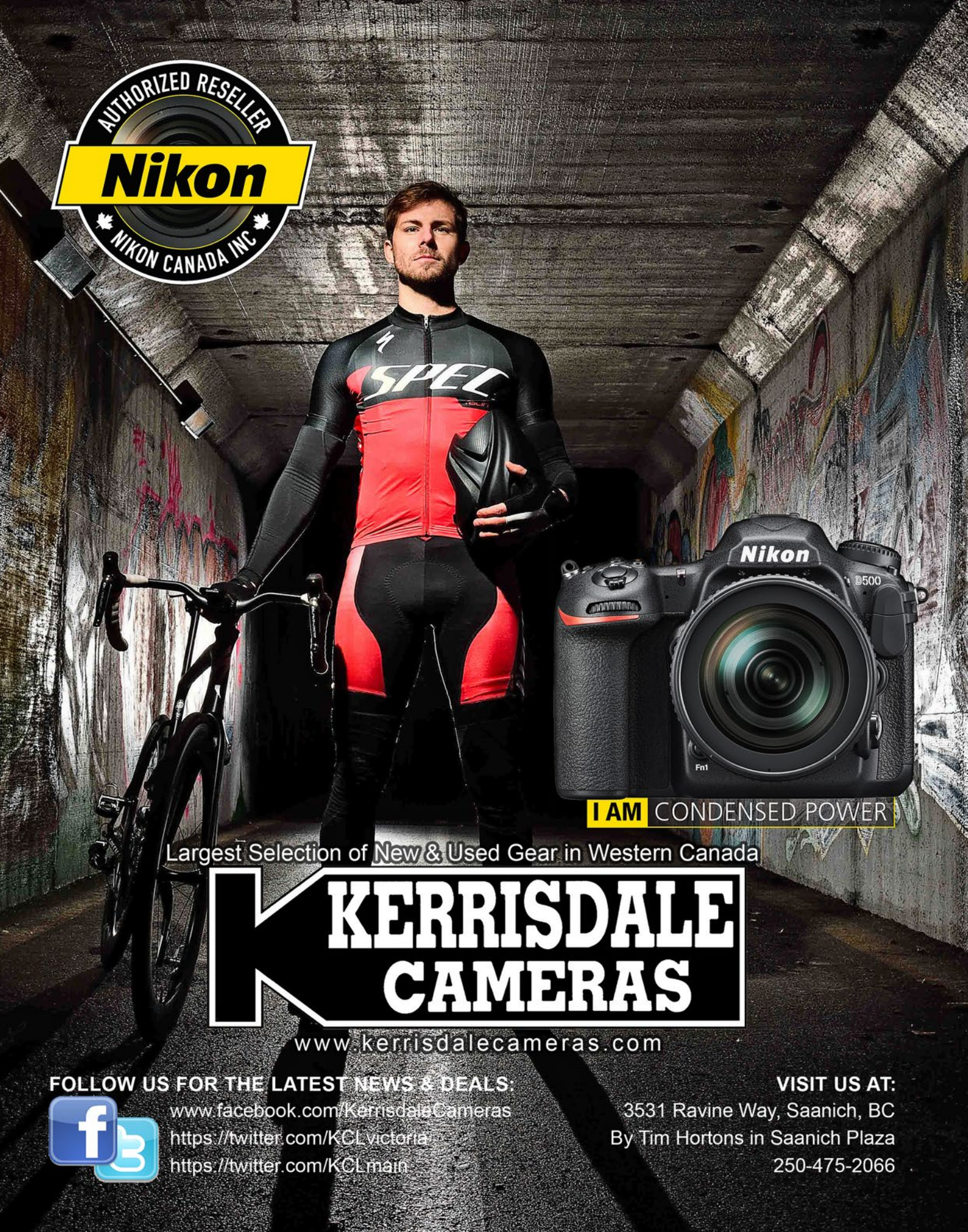

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