



Close-Up

VictoriaCameraClub.ca

Blending Modes in Photoshop
Photographing Musicians
Workshop: Architecture as Art
VCC's Creative SIG
Creating Different Nature Images
Member Profile: Don Piper
Santa's List
The Group of Seven
Painted Images
Photo Tours
Beginner's Corner: Composition

"Fall Colours" by Gordon Griffiths

Victoria Camera Club

December 2020 Volume 73 Number 9

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Victoria Camera Club



"Costa's Hummingbird" by Don Piper

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 7:00 PM, all meetings, workshops and SIG's are currently on-line only.

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, \$70; Family, \$107; Student, \$36 until Dec 31).

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*.

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December 2020

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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).



VICTORIA ARTS COUNCIL



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.

All meetings and workshops are on-line only until further notice. Please check the calendar for updates.

December 10th: Presentation Night. Mike O'Connor will present his approach to shooting his Bucket List images from around the world.

Workshop Highlights: Architecture as Art, Image Review: all levels.

Field Trip Highlights: Night shoot Downtown and Harbour area.

Cover Image: "Fall Colours" by Gordon Griffiths. This image was made in late October in the Japanese Garden at Butchart Gardens. The sky that morning was cloudless and a strong wind was blowing off Todd Inlet.

Restrictions at the gardens, as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, make photography difficult. No tripods are allowed. Some pathways were not open because of spacing issues. However, I have never seen such intense, vibrant fall colours as occurred this fall.

I arrived just before opening time and went directly to the Japanese Garden. Since it was a relatively cold morning, there were very few people at Butchart at that time. I was fortunate to have about an hour and one-half to photograph with only one other person in the area (the official photographer for Butchart Gardens). The only sounds were the wind in the trees and the exclamations of wonder and joy coming from me and the other photographer.

Although I took some images at slower shutter speeds to take advantage of the strong winds and create blurred photos, I wanted to have sharp leaves and branches in my photos. The light was remarkable because the sun rose over the trees and was streaming into the area almost horizontally because of the time of year.

Since I couldn't use a tripod, I was handholding with either a 24-70 mm or a 70-200 mm lens. I exposed for the highlights to avoid blowing out the leaves. My shutter speeds were either 1/250th or 1/320th for most shots. The shadows were significantly underexposed but I was able to recover them in post-capture processing. It was a wonderful morning.

President's Message

After some careful thought and consideration, the board decided we will be unable to safely have the Christmas Social this year. Having said that, I do hope that you consider making a donation of what you would have spent at the social to a worthy charity.

The end of the year is a good time to look back at what we have accomplished in our Club and 2020 has been anything but ordinary.

Our website has continued in the capable hands of Richard Letourneau and his crew. They continue to expand what's available and keep our social media up to date. Richard and Kim Smith also organized and executed our transition onto Zoom with ease keeping everything running smoothly.

Speaking of Kim, she will be stepping back as Workshop Coordinator at the end of the year. She and her team have done an excellent job keeping us learning from the comforts of our home (and possibly in pj's). Thank you, Kim, for all that you've done!

Our internal and external competitions committees, led by Jill Turyk and Leah Gray, continue their hard work with their teams in reviewing our submitted images and selecting the best of the best.

Our field trips have taken on a different look and feel but after a break we are back in the field with smaller groups and lots of precautions. Rilla Ballantyne is now the Field Trip Coordinator and Deb Thurlbeck, Penny Authier, and Jim Fowler continue to lead the Tuesday groups. A special thank you to Vanessa McDonald for all her years of organizing some fabulous field trips!

Our SIGs have continued on Zoom with Jim Gardner and Steve Sproston taking on the Nature SIG and Kevin Keliher and Normand Marcotte guiding us on our journey in the Creative SIG. Many thanks to Dan and Gail Takahashi and Penny Codding for all of your help keeping us engaged with the SIGs. I am also happy to say that Graham Budd created the Mobile Photography SIG this year and it has been popular from the start!

We have managed, as a group, to get through a trying time and are better than ever. This is all thanks to the many volunteers who give their time and knowledge to help their fellow creators. To you all I say thank you and wish you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Teri VanWell, President

Blending Modes in Photoshop

by Kirk Schwartz

Everybody knows how to “double expose” or “ghost” using opacity. It kind of works, sometimes. So, what’s the difference between that and using blend modes? Blend modes use math to do their work. You can scroll through them until you find the one you think looks best. That can take time and if you don’t understand what they are doing, you won’t understand their power.

Blend modes work at the pixel level. They “look” at pixels on the base layer and the top, or blend layer. Then a simple or complex mathematical function creates a new result. This can be subtle or really funky.

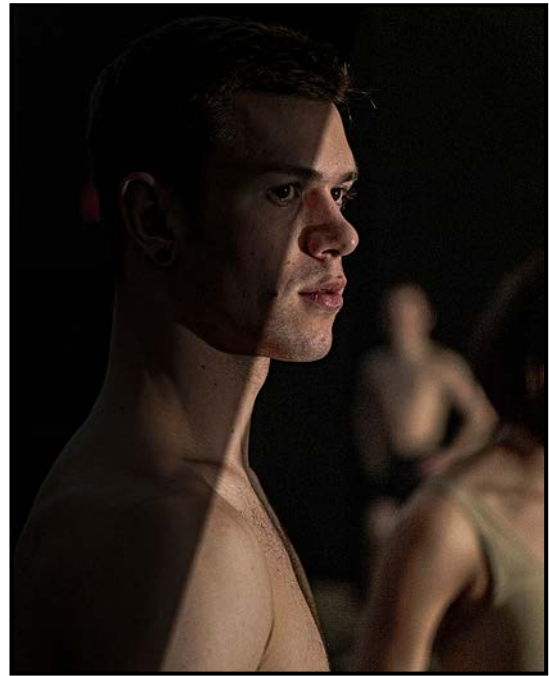


“Funky Difference Effect”

Here, I used a slightly-shifted image layer blended with the base layer using “Difference” mode and show the before (left) and after image (right). Adobe says that the effect subtracts the lower brightness value from the higher value. See: tinyurl.com/y4t4wtbb.

Next, I used the “Screen” mode to brighten an under-exposed portrait of a dancer (before left, after right). When you increase the exposure, in-camera or in post-processing, noise is created by errors occurring as software tries to calculate a new value for each pixel. Screen mode uses the colour values of each pixel to increase brightness. Black pixels are ignored. If you have a noisy image, you might increase the noise as well!

Effects like displacement mapping, frequency separation, dodging and burning, skin retouching and compositing use blend modes. With all blend modes, reducing the opacity of the layer reduces the change of the effect. There are six categories of blend modes.



“Under-exposed Portrait”

The “Normal” group includes Normal (no blending) and Dissolve. In Dissolve, changing opacity results in a speckled effect rather than a smooth opacity reduction.

The “Darken” group includes Darken, Multiply, Color Burn, Linear Burn and Darker Color. These always result in a darker pixel, with no effect on pure white.

The “Lighten” group includes Lighten, Screen, Color and Linear Dodge and Lighter Color. Opposite to “Darken” it lightens pixels, with no effect on black.

The “Contrast” group includes Overlay, Soft Light, Hard Light, Vivid Light, Linear Light, Pin Light and Hard Mix. It lightens pixels above 50% grey and darkens lower pixels.

The “Comparative” group produces a pixel different to either layer. Some are extreme and as you can see from my Difference illustration, the effect can be pretty startling.

Finally, the “Color” group blends the layers to create a result that is a mix of some or all of the pixel values of the Hue, Saturation, Colour and Luminosity attributes.

Serge Ramelli has produced a video concentrating on blend modes for photographers at tinyurl.com/yyaep5q7. For a deep dive into Blending Modes check out the Photoshop Training Channel (with Jesus Rameriz) at tinyurl.com/y3eqlytq or with Unmesh Dinda from PixImperfect at tinyurl.com/y46ykxaf.

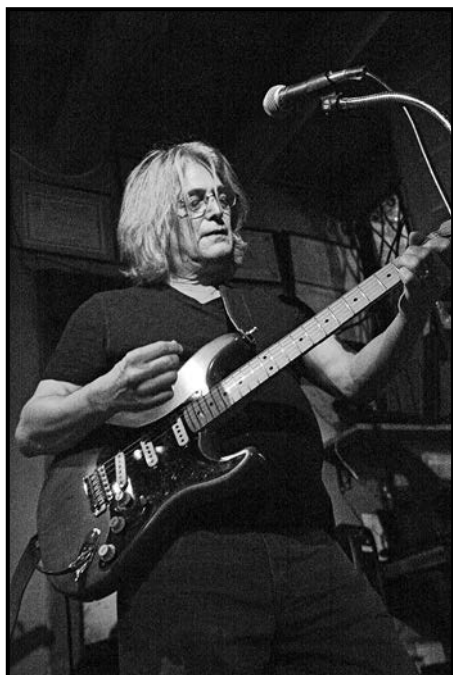
Finally, Colin Smith at Photoshop Cafe provides a text and video guide at tinyurl.com/y27qaopq.

Photographing Musicians

by John Clarke

My journey into the loud and dark world of concert photography started in 2016 when my wife, Gail Dolyn, and I travelled to Santa Fe, New Mexico. In addition to exploring the countryside and Georgia O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch, we also checked out Canyon Road in Santa Fe's historic arts district where we found the Canyon Road Blues Jam at El Farol. We booked a table for dinner, and I decided to take my camera. That evening proved to be the start of my journey into live concert photography.

Inexperienced with such low light photography and shooting with a crop sensor camera, I cranked my ISO up to 6,400 and opened my aperture to f4 and shot at shutter speeds between 1/125th and 1/200th second. Most of my shots were handheld while on the dance floor. To say I found this experience exhilarating would be an understatement.



"Canyon Road Blues Jam"

This image is unprocessed straight out of the camera as my post-processing talents in 2016 were limited. The image is grainy, and lacks adjustments to blacks and whites however, that is where my skill level was in 2016. My post-processing skills have grown considerably thanks to Camera Club workshops.

Enjoying the concert scene so much I wanted to continue exploring this genre of photography. We are fortunate to have a friend whose son-in-law plays in a metal thrash band, Torrefy. They perform in the darker music venues

in Victoria, those that usually don't open until 9 pm, and the bands can play past midnight.

I finally garnered the courage, stamina and a good set of ear plugs to photograph Torrefy at the recently closed Logan's Pub in March, 2017. Torrefy was the third of three bands to play that evening. I got to the venue early and connected with the band. I practiced shooting the first two bands, paying particular attention to the rhythm and motion of the venue lighting, becoming aware of any distracting features in the background, and searching for the good vantage points for solid action shots.

Torrefy hit the stage at 11 pm and I spent the next hour shooting over 1,000 images. While burst mode increased my odds of capturing a great image, it made my editing process slow as I spent hours labouring through them all. Best practice for future concerts: Be more selective, take fewer shots.

I checked out other venues such as Copper Owl, Capital Ballroom and V Lounge. I would research bands on the bandcamp.com website where I could listen to their music. The louder and raunchier the music, the more I wanted to shoot them.

After deciding to go to a show, I would connect with the band through social media, usually Facebook Messenger. I would introduce myself, offer a few sample images and ask permission to shoot their show, always clarifying I was doing it for free and that I would share images with them. The bands were all very receptive.

If you are not familiar with heavy metal or thrash bands, you will find that they are very loud, heavy on the bass and very aggressive and fast tempo. Musicians get on stage, the lights dim and the dark room shudders and rocks, as inaudible lyrics barely reach over the wailing guitar and pounding drums. I find it an awesome experi-



"Torrefy at Capital Ballroom"

ence, rhythmic and almost hypnotic. My primary motivation is to be respectful to the band and venue by asking both for permission, and to the bands fans by not getting in the way of their enjoyment of the band's music.



"In Vain at Copper Owl"

Whether to process an image in colour or black and white is always one of my creative decisions when shooting concert photography. Both can have dramatic impact sweat on the lead singer's forehead and coloured lights shining through a smoky room. My image of Torrefy at Capital Ballroom, with their vibrant lights and smoky haze has less impact in black and white while my image of In Vain at Copper Owl, the glistening sweat and intensity looks different when processed in black and white. (These images are in colour in the on-line version of *Close-Up*).



"Grimwood at Copper Owl"

Many of the venues have distracting surroundings and backgrounds including wall-mounted televisions, Keno boards and signs. While I am getting better at eliminating distractions in post-processing, another method I use is to shoot from different angles such as the image of Grimwood at Copper Owl. The stage configuration was a real challenge so I positioned myself towards

the back left of the stage. There, without numerous distractions, I captured a great image that displayed the intense focus of the lead guitarist.

I have learned a few things during my concert photography journey. Wear good ear plugs. Limit your gear as you can be in very confined surroundings. Know your camera settings and be able to make adjustments in the dark.

You will be shooting at a high ISO, up to 6400, however, make sure you shoot in RAW as this will give you more flexibility in post-processing. While burst mode is your friend, be selective so you have a manageable number of images to select before post-processing. Shoot from different angles, look for emotion, and try to capture the interaction with the crowd.

I cannot underestimate the importance of doing research on both the bands and the venue. Obtain permission from both, and be respectful. The paying fans are there to see the band, and they will not appreciate a photographer getting in the way. Also, it helps if you enjoy and get into the music. It will show in your photographs.

I continue to work hard to improve my concert photography although COVID-19 is making this a challenge. Musicians are performing in smaller venues with limited people in the audience. COVID safety protocols such as plexiglass screens between the musicians and the audience, make shooting conditions very challenging. So, during different times, try different things.

I attended a recent concert in Nootka Court hosted by Jagasilk Tea Bar. My image of Sister Speak, was taken through plexiglass so I tried to do something different. I decided to shoot multiple exposures, seeking to capture a reflective moment. Converting it to black and white with some post-processing made an interesting image.



"Sister Speak"

Workshop: Architecture as Art

by Jim Fowler

To help you decide whether or not to attend Sharon Tenenbaum's Zoom workshop on December 7th, have a look at just one of her images. Look at her photo of the Giorgio Armani staircase, located in Armani's 5th Avenue, New York store. If her capture of those undulating curves, sensuous and luxurious, does not grab your attention, then you are immune to dramatic architectural photography!

If you are more likely to be convinced by awards than by your own eyes, consider her history of awards just in bridge photography. In 2015 she received a first place International Photography Award in Architecture-Bridges for her Hoofddorp Bridge series. The three bridges photographed, constructed in Hoofddorp on the outskirts of Amsterdam, were designed by the award-winning Spanish engineer and architect, Santiago Calatrava, and are conceived in the form of a harp, a lute and a lyre. This award was preceded, in 2013, by a first-place award in the International Photography Awards, Architecture-Bridges, for her Sundial Bridge series, also designed by Santiago Calatrava, located in Redding, California. Before that, in 2011, she was awarded first place for her Oporto Bridges series capturing the bridges of Porto, in Portugal and, in 2008, first place for her photo of Capilano Suspension Bridge in North Vancouver, BC. These are just her "bridge" awards.

Bridges, especially the sculptural works of Santiago Calatrava, are a natural subject for Sharon's architectural sensibility. A civil engineer trained in Israel, who then practised in Vancouver, Sharon Tenenbaum gave up engineering to pursue photography. Her goal is to "wow" the viewer with stunning, dynamic images. She is definitely an adherent of the school of photography that believes that the finished photo is a "thing" in itself. In her words, "I put significant thought into pre-vision, composition and post-processing." Sharon has a varied portfolio, including of course bridges, but also: city sky-lines, adding drama with long-exposure sky blur; architectural patterns, featuring dynamic curves; and the light/dark contrast of edge photography, lighting-up structure edges the way Rembrandt lit faces.

She also does "paintography" (landscapes painted on landscape photographs), long exposure photos designed to "stretch" time (rather than being just a frozen moment), "bike art" made up of parts of bicycles on a Vancouver backdrop, and a series of Vancouver photos featuring a variety of time-altering techniques. In

her eBook, *The Ultimate Guide to Long Exposure Fine Art Photography*, she says, "If we manage to capture movement or change in a photograph, we add a fourth dimension..." Sharon is also the author of the eBook *Left and Right Brain: a Photographer's Understanding of How These Mindsets Affect Our Visual Interpretation of Art*. This is an artist who fully conceptualizes her art. You can find her work at sharontenenbaum.com. Check out her free one-hour weekly Zoom sessions *Photo Talk & Learn*. Don't forget to see her award-winning series on bridges, from the Hoofddorp Lute Bridge to the Capilano Suspension Bridge. Imagine the latter emerging from one corner, filling the corner by using a wide-angle lens, and extending the ever-diminishing wires into the distant opposite corner, all "suspended" at a rakish angle, from corner to corner. Anyone susceptible to vertigo?

"Architecture as Art" is a good description of much of her work. Beginning with a careful choice of visually stunning subjects, artfully photographed by choosing graphically dramatic layouts, making generous use of a balance of light and dark, and aided by structural lines and lines of movement created by long exposure, the architecture is transformed. She says, "Architectural photography is where I get to marry my left engineering brain with my right artistic side".

Sharon's work is eclectic. She has a series in which she combined long exposures with still shots, "enlarging the spectrum of time" in the contrast of the two. I haven't even mentioned her "cubist" city composites, stacked and tweaked to perfection in Photoshop, producing images that combine multiple views of the city that mimic the visual "cacophony" of city life. Remember Normand Marcotte's great composite of a Tokyo street crossing from last year? Now imagine it on steroids!

Sharon's long exposure technique uses neutral density filters that reduce the light 13 to 16 f-stops. Her preferred equipment includes magnetic filter rings in combination with ND filters, all easily "snapped" into place using super-magnets in the filter rings. She writes about her preferred equipment on her website.

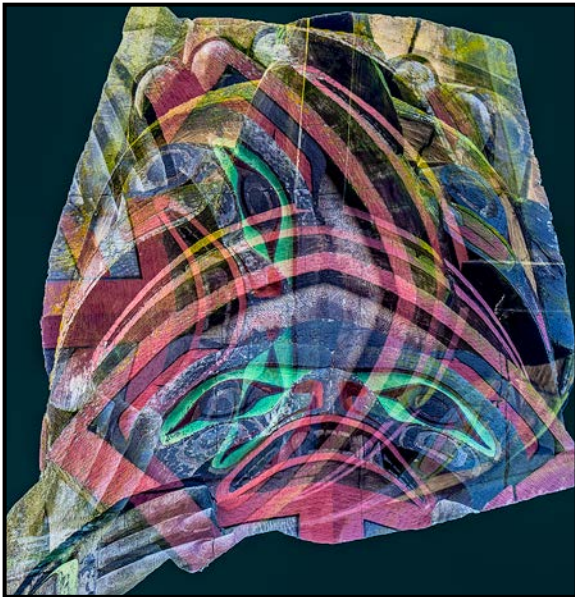
Sharon teaches Fine Art, Long Exposure, and Architectural Photography at Langara College and SFU Continuing Studies. She does private and public workshops and has had her work shown in National Geographic Magazine and private galleries. She also sells her art and publications through her website. If you appreciate a flair for artistic design with stunning graphics, you won't want to miss this workshop. Our Workshop Committee is working hard to bring us outstanding artists from around the globe. Take advantage of it while it lasts.

VCC's Creative SIG

by Kevin Keliher

The Creative SIG was started in February 2013 to explore photography that goes beyond representational images. Creative or Altered Reality photographs can be achieved by a wide variety of techniques including, but not limited to: composite images from layers of other images, using Photoshop-type or Nik/Topaz-like software, multiple exposure, Lensbaby lenses, pinhole cameras, staging a scene prior to the shoot, Intentional Camera Movement (ICM) and other blurring effects.

The first half of the meeting is for a guest speaker and/or demonstration. The second half is for participants to share their images with the group and to receive feedback. Each month a different Creative Challenge is offered to nudge participants' creative efforts in directions they may have not considered before.



"Totem" by Peter Amundsen

I first attended a Creative SIG meeting in the fall of 2015. I was awed by the images, their creative expansiveness, subtlety, and beauty. I was very inspired and as it turned out, was hooked, not only on the meetings but also this style of art-making. The monthly Creative Challenges were enough of an impetus to awaken a longing I did not know I had. Combining photos, changing colours, rearranging objects, sometimes shocking myself with the transformative power of Photoshop. To be able to change the original image so much can greatly enhance one's storytelling powers. The image control available in-camera and/or in post-processing can open us to an almost limitless potential. I continue to find this aspect of creative photography quite freeing.

The second half of each meeting is an opportunity for participants to share their work. The emphasis is on support and encouragement. There might be the occasional, carefully-chosen "suggestion" aimed at assisting the author to improve the image(s).

I personally feel this is a delicate area. Creativity is such a personal thing so what do we know about where someone should take an image next? Drawing out the creator's discernment regarding where/what should come next in their creative process is, in my mind, the first and often the most important step in offering support.

The Creative SIG's new co-facilitator, Normand Marcotte, has been setting a good example with using the Creative SIG website forum more regularly. Normand has been posting the Creative Challenge for the coming month and, when possible, the presenters' PowerPoint slides/notes. This forum is also a place where members can engage in some interesting exchanges on relevant topics and post images for feedback (e.g., Want a Headache). The Gallery section of the website has a gallery for the Creative SIG. There are some awesome images displayed there.



"Beauty Goat" by Anne MacCarthy

As I reflect, I believe the Creative SIG has grown as our numbers have increased and participation has improved. I hope to see more members sharing their images and offering demonstrations on a favourite technique. There is room for greater use of our gallery and forum as a place for discussing issues, posting images for feedback and asking questions between meetings.

I wish to thank all those members whose participation makes the Creative SIG an educational, fun, safe and supportive experience.

VCC Internal and External Comps

by Jill Turyk and Leah Gray

Internal Competitions: Each month there is a theme category in the internal competitions. These are selected over the summer by the Internal Competitions Committee. The monthly themes are available on the website at: tinyurl.com/y45ujz93.

There are many reasons to enter competitions. Rather than dusting off your travel photos and before heading to the lagoon for a wildlife shot, the theme category gives you an opportunity to create an image intentionally, based on an idea given to you by us. First you must develop an understanding of the theme and how you can convey that in an image. Then you need to find the right circumstances to get that image. This is not as easy as it sounds. The challenge is meeting the criteria of the theme in a way that is creative and unique.

Themes get you out of your comfort zone. Forget birds in flight and getting up at four in the morning for that perfectly-lit landscape. This is a chance to try something and make a competition-worthy image in a different way than you would normally. Some themes can be done indoors. We gave thought to that when we created “Still Life” as a theme this year. In the dark and rainy weather, you can stay warm and dry and try some indoor photography.

External Competitions: The 2020-21 competition season is underway. We received a near-record number of entries for the first three competitions. Thank you! We encourage members to take a chance and enter an external competition, if you have not already done so.

One of the questions we get asked is why enter? Here are a few reasons: Entering competitions is a way to curate your images, cast a critical eye over them carefully and get opinions from others. Have someone check for faults that you may have missed, like dust spots or distractions along the edges. Is there an emotional connection coming through in your images? Is it unique and technically well done? Find out by entering. How do your images stand up to the competition? Get Inspired!

If your image is rejected, was there an obvious reason? It may be the focus was off or the crop was not quite right. Get feedback. Get out of your comfort zone. You can do this! Competitions will help you grow as a photographer.

We have an all-level Image Review on December 14th 2020 and several competitions coming up in January 2021. Please check the VCC calendar for details.

October Competition Judges

We sincerely thank our external judges for the October Intermediate and Advanced level competitions, Tom Savage, Karen Stoyles, Gregg Eligh, Michael Breakey, Ed Moniz and Mike Byrne. We also extend thanks to our in-house judges for novice competitions and intermediate prints: Pam Irvine, Lorna Zaback, Leah Gray, Nicci Tyndall and Richard Webber. Images and judges' comments are available at: tinyurl.com/yyw7t4ey.

Tom Savage: Digital Wildlife. Tom has much experience in Nature and Photojournalism photography, winning 29 Best of Show medals and 122 other medals in 11 different countries. He has won Nature Image of the Year and one of his prints was the PSA's Nature Print of the Year in 2016. Tom is a judge with the PSA.

Karen Stoyles: Digital Open. Karen lives in Brantford, Ontario where she is an active member of the Brant Camera Club. Her main photographic interests lie with wildflower, macro and creative photography. Karen has been judging photography for over 10 years for camera clubs, local organizations and fairs. You can find some of her beautiful images on Flickr.

Gregg Eligh: Digital Theme. Gregg is a good friend to the club and well known for his judging over the years and his interesting workshops. He has worked across North America and the Caribbean doing corporate, catalogue, editorial, and advertising photography. Gregg's work can also be seen in several gallery shows every year.

Michael Breakey: Digital People. Michael Breakey is a professional photographer based in Kelowna. His passion is landscape and available light portraiture. Michael has presented numerous workshops specializing in Photoshop and Lightroom. He is currently the Director of Education for CAPA.

Ed Moniz: Digital Altered Realty. Ed has studied black and white photography and printing, and completed a one-year mentorship program with George DeWolfe. As a Professional Photographers of Canada member he earned Accreditation in Night Photography and designation as “Craftsman of Photographic Arts”. Ed is a former VCC member and presented workshops for 10 years.

Mike Byrne: Advanced Prints. Mike is a co-founder of Clock Tower Images in Victoria. He grew up in Alberta's Rocky Mountains and has always pursued outdoor activities. As a natural extension, he started to produce outdoor adventure films and videos. Mike leads international photography workshops with emphasis on wildlife.



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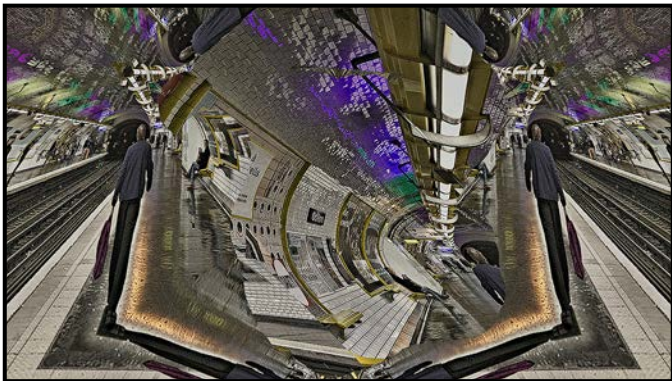


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Advanced Altered Reality - 1st
"Lost in the Paris Metro" by Steve Smith

Judge's Comments: More than three pathways to your choice of reality. This is a strong composition with a compelling story.



Advanced Open - 1st
"On the Wing" by Kim Smith

Judge's Comments: An exquisite capture and lighting of the Heron in flight. The maker has given the bird room to "move" within the frame. We are able to enjoy the texture in the feathers and the soft lighting on the face. Nicely done.



Advanced Wildlife - 1st
"Hummingbird 2" by Gordon Griffiths

Judge's Comments: Good nature image because of a good story with the bird eating. It is very sharp and cropped properly with good exposure.



Advanced People - 1st
"Looking for Lions" by Steve Lustig

Judge's Comments: This is a well-executed portrait. The lighting on the subject is well handled as well as the background.



Advanced Theme - 1st

"Evening Stroll Along the Seine" by Leah Gray

Judge's Comments: Well done illustrating a less than typical perspective on a well-photographed landmark. Including the human element creates a "story" and provides a sense of scale and reference for the location.



Advanced Nature Print - 2nd

"Marbled Godwit" by Richard James

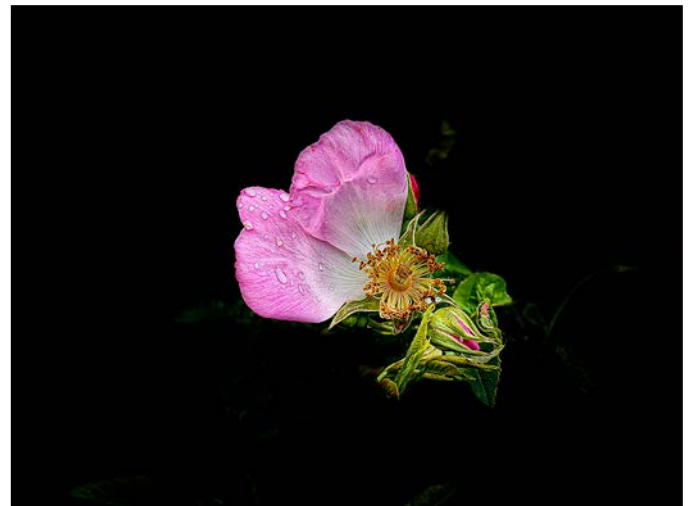
Judge's Comments: This is a nicely-composed image in good light. The pose of the bird adds drama and action.



Advanced Monochrome Print - 1st

"Stairs" by Steve Barber

Judge's Comments: I love the creativity in this image beyond the excellent composition and use of light. The motion blur on the character is disconcerting, as is the crop at the neck, but I think they work. To me, this image really stands out.



Advanced Open Print - 1st

"Part of a Rose is Still a Rose" by Bobbie Carey

Judge's Comments: This is a great image. I love the subject matter and how it has been presented within the competition. Lighting is great and the sharpness is fabulous. Nice work!



Intermediate Altered Reality - 2nd
"Coast Guard Station" by Don Piper

Judge's Comments: It is hard to pin this image down as there is no single point that dominates the composition. This is great for this category and this time where everyone is feeling some degree of chaos in their lives. Good composition and great use of colour.



Intermediate Wildlife - 1st
"Snack Time" by Peter Amundsen

Judge's Comments: Good technically and very strong nature story.



Intermediate Open - 1st
"The Ballerina" by Lorna Scott

Judge's Comments: This is an exquisite, moody image. The photographer has paid attention to all the technical aspects including dramatic lighting, sharpness and placement of the subject.



Intermediate Theme - 1st
"Into the Light" by Graham Budd

Judge's Comments: Good eye!! Timing with the minimal detail works here for maximum drama, but doesn't always work. This image meets the theme requirement without being heavy-handed, but requires us to fill in the blanks.



Intermediate People - 1st
"Waiting" by Pam Irvine

Judge's Comments: A well-exposed image. One can imagine the story around her clothing and the location.



Novice Wildlife - 2nd
"Humpback Breach" by Jennifer Carlstrom

Judge's Comments: A beautiful shot of a Humpback breaching, a great West Coast image. The "rule of thirds" used although difficult with the extension of the arm. The misty background adds to the story. While the whale is coming down in the breach, it is still in the peak of the action. The spray of water at the top adds to the strong composition. The photographer was at water level which adds to the story. Well done.



Intermediate Open Print - 1st
"Sandpiper Sunrise" by Teri VanWell

Judge's Comments: Beautiful scene. Using black and white works well for this image. Nice leading line of rocks leading the viewer's eye into the image to the horizon. Lots of detail visible in the rocks.



Novice Open - 1st
"I Believe I can Fly" by Maureen Reid

Judge's Comments: This is a delightful image. A very commanding perspective that aids in creating diagonal elements to enhance the image's impact. Good use of negative space which allows the subject to move through the frame. The starburst and the lens flair really add to the image. Well done.



Novice People - 3rd

"Girls in Terai Region, Nepal" by Merna Foster

Judge's Comments: Good composition. The colours are enticing and the colour balance looks good. The soft light coming from the side and the expressions on their faces tells a story and evokes emotion.



Novice Open Print - 1st

"Red Umbrella in a Fernwood Brownfield"

by Robert Patterson

Judge's Comments: An interesting image with an unexpected red umbrella. A good attempt on an interesting concept.



Novice Theme - 1st

"Just Where is that Wine Bar?" by Joanne Couch

Judge's Comments: A good exposure and a nice leading line down the street to the figure walking away make this an interesting image. The texture and colour of the beautiful stonework on the left adds interest.

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Creating Different Nature Images

by Kathryn Delany

Have you ever looked at your nature images and thought that maybe some of them, while technically excellent, are actually not really that exciting? Maybe it's the background, or you were not close enough, or cropped too much or maybe it's simply boring?

Different approaches to processing to make your images stand out include combining layered textures, colours, paint strokes, distortions and graphic elements to create a composite of something new and interesting.

These two eagle images are good examples. The original photo for "Eagle on High" image was good. However, it lacked in excitement as it was against a solid blue sky. Adding graphic elements of a tilted square within a square, directional lines and paint, gives the image a sense of forward movement. In the "Soaring Eagle" image I had clipped the wing tips but still loved the energy. Adding clouds, textures and colour tones results in an interesting new composite.



"Eagle on High"

"Soaring Eagle"

In the "Eagle on High" image the edits were done on my iPad using Photoshop Mix to crop the eagle out of the original photo and the Procreate Painting app for the painted effects.

In the "Soaring Eagle" image I added textures and colour blends on top of both images. I used SkyLab on my iPad for the sky and Enlight for textures.

A current trend that embraces colour and contrast sees saturated colour making a comeback. Black and white/monochromatic remains popular, with a hint of colour seeping in. Keep it simple or abstracted. Utilize an interesting crop. Use close-up or macro as a tool to emphasize details. Try keeping the focal element simple, a single poppy, black and white or pastel tones and make a series of the same subject.



"Osprey"

This Osprey image is a composite done with Photoshop Mix and texture overlays with soft blend modes.

Creating a composite by combining images using blending modes and filters to make something new is gaining acceptance where images are crossing the line between "art" and photography, called creative/altered reality.

The iPad apps that I use include: Procreate for painted elements and final compilation, iColorama for photo manipulation, Photoshop Mix, PS Express, SuperimposeX, Snapseed, Enlight, Skylab, Pixlemator Photo, Distressed FX, Formulas and Fused to mention a few.

This Zebra composite uses two images. I did this edit using Photoshop Mix. First mask the zebras to remove their background. Next add a red colour style over the Acacia trees image. Apply a difference blend adjustment to the zebra layer, tweak some settings which results in a surreal yet evocative image.

I encourage you to experiment in the ways mentioned here and have fun.



"Zebras Under the Trees"

Member Profile: Don Piper

My photographic experiences began in about 1976 after I became a realtor in Vancouver. My Minolta film camera did me well for years as I photographed homes I was selling. We moved to Saturna Island on a full-time basis in 1989 and sold real estate there until selling my company and moving to Victoria in 2008. Normand Marcotte, whom I knew from Saturna Island, encouraged me to join the Victoria Camera Club and I did so in 2015. From then on, my photography began to improve and I became more creative.

One of the most valuable things the Club offered was the workshops given by Cindy Stephenson. The Lightroom workshop she taught really brought all my loose photographs together and helped me organize a workflow that made sense. I am now comfortable shooting in Raw knowing that in Lightroom I can adjust the image to create what I saw in my mind. Since then the workshops and field trips offered by the Club have really captured my life and made photography one of the best things about retirement. I appreciate all the volunteer time that members donate to the Club.



"Backyard Storm"

Since my early Minolta camera, I moved on to a Nikon D80 then a D7000, D750 and now the new mirrorless Nikon Z7. I have stuck with the Nikon system as it is similar in each of their cameras.

I love that Canon, Fuji and other companies are out there and pushing each other to develop better cameras and lenses. As I get older the lighter mirrorless camera has made a big difference to the amount of gear that I carry on my numerous outings.

I have travelled over much of the world and taken images in most of these places. I can look back now and

appreciate them as well as follow how a family grows from children and now, grandchildren. It is very comforting. Photography is such an amazing outlet. Just consider how many cell phones are clicking and rolling away out there now. Photography is changing our lives on a daily basis.



"Star Trails over the Superstitions"

We were Snowbirds for over 20 years, spending seven months in Victoria and five months in Arizona. I have been fascinated with the desert since that time and have taken thousands of images in the desert and surrounding mountains. The colour and starkness of the landscape, rock spires, volcanic mountains, and fantastic wildflowers have kept my shutter clicking.

However, Vancouver Island is a wonderful place. I am always appreciative of the Island when our friends visit. We show them around, and they are so amazed at all the wonderful vistas they see. It just reminds me that I should not be overlooking the many hidden treasures that we have so close to home.

Those distant locations always strike my imagination, but the truth is I must look more closely at what we have here on Vancouver Island. It is a magnificent place.



"Yellow Bird Dancer at the Wave"

Santa's List

by Roger Botting

COVID is this year's version of the Grinch. Here are a few distractions for holiday shopping.

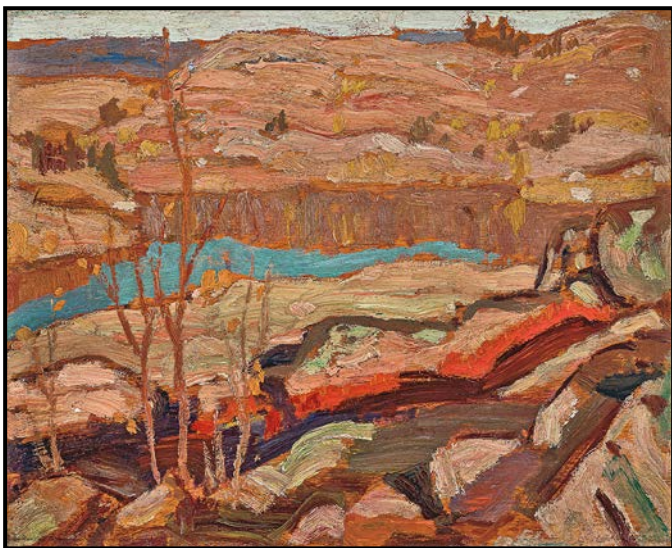
1. LADDA: no, not the car. The IKEA brand of NI-MH batteries. I have heard that they are re-badged Eneloop batteries, the battery that is considered the standard for rechargeable batteries. If so, these represent a real bargain. \$10 for 4 AA or AAAs.
2. VINNINGE: Another IKEA product. A USB battery charger for the AA and AAA rechargeables in your life. It will do two batteries at a time using your phone charger and it is smart enough to not overcharge your batteries. A good on-the-road charger instead of bringing your big charger.
3. Smallrig is a company that makes quality grip equipment. You might have heard that they make nice cages for cameras but they also have nice clamps for holding small lights, microphones, etc. I use their clamps for small lights in micro photography and also to hold a laser for night photography.
4. NEEWER Pro Lens Repair Tool: You have dropped your lens and the front filter ring is now dented. Do not grab the pliers and try to straighten it. You will only make a mess of the threads and likely never get it right. The NEEWER tool does straighten the threads the proper way. Don't bother with the NEEWER Lens Disassembling Tool Set 10-100 mm. It's barely adequate for the job. For no real expense they could have made a better tool.
5. Samsung T5 Portable SSD: About the size of six AAA batteries. Mine holds 500 GB. It's so small that you haven't any good excuses to not do a backup while traveling. It also works well with external video recorders though I haven't tried it for that. It doesn't need an external power supply and is fairly rugged and very fast compared to many conventional portable drives. The 500 GB size is often on sale locally for about \$120.
6. RAVPower battery charger: Mine is for the Nikon EN-EL15. It will charge two batteries at once and works off the cigarette lighter in your car or from its AC adapter. Mine did not work properly with the supplied cigarette lighter adapter but I had a spare that works properly. RAVPower also sells camera batteries. One of mine lasted two years before it died and the other is still going strong at three years. It doesn't seem to have the same capacity as the official batteries but it is so much less expensive.
7. RAVPower FileHUB Travel Router: with an external battery. This is one of those tools that is almost first class. It is a battery that allows you to recharge your phone two-three times. You can plug in an Ethernet cable and connect to a network and then use the FileHUB as a wireless hub. This allows you to connect multiple cellphones, both iPhone and Android, computers, etc. to whatever network you connect to but its real power is that it can read SD cards. You connect your SSD drive to the FileHUB, put your SD card in, push one button and the FileHUB will back up all the contents of your SD card very quickly. This is a full backup. You can connect your cellphone to the FileHUB to see the contents of your SSD drive. You can use it with other card readers but it's a pain.
8. NISI 77 mm MC Close-up Lens: A high-quality screw in close-up lens with approximately three Dioptres magnification. It does allow you to focus quite closely with your larger camera lens. I tried it with my 80-400 mm lens. The combo gets very heavy but, on a tripod, it allows you to do close-ups with some subject distance. It comes with several adapter rings and there is a smaller size available.
9. GODOX flash filter adapter and filters: This adapter fits on most medium-sized camera-top flashes of various brands. It attaches to my Nikon SB800 flash for instance. You can attach various accessories to the adapter. A snoot, barndoors, colour balancing filters, effect filters, grid spots, and diffusers. It is especially useful should you use multiple brands of flash units.
10. WhiBal: A durable grey card. Use it for getting better exposure and colour balance.
11. MIOPS Smart+ camera trigger: This device includes a lightning trigger, a too-expensive flash trigger, an expensive interval timer which can do some interesting tricks, and a beam-break trigger. The last function allows you to set up a laser and use it to trip your camera should something break the light beam. While you can do most of the functions with the device it is so much easier to use the cellphone app, both iPhone and Android. The app also has a few other useful functions including exposure calculators, sound trigger, motion sensor. With some sleuthing you can get a 15% discount. It ships from Turkey but delivery seems quick. I had some initial issues connecting but a more careful reading of the instructions helped. You need to download the app to get it to work with your cellphone.

The Group of Seven

by Lorna Zaback

Since the VCC's January 2021 competition theme is "Homage to the Group of Seven" (see November 2020 *Close-Up* for more detailed guidelines), we thought it might be helpful to include an article in this issue about the Group of Seven and the impact they and their work have had on Canadian artists and photographers.

The official date of the Group's inception is May 7, 1920, with six of the original seven: Lawren Harris, F.H. Varley, Franklin Carmichael, Arthur Lismer, Frank Johnston and J.E.H. MacDonald present. A.Y. Jackson, also a founding member, was on a painting expedition in Georgian Bay at the time. Membership changed somewhat in the early 30's. Johnston had departed for Winnipeg and Edwin Holgate, L.L. Fitzgerald and A.J. Casson joined the remaining six. However, the Group retained its name.

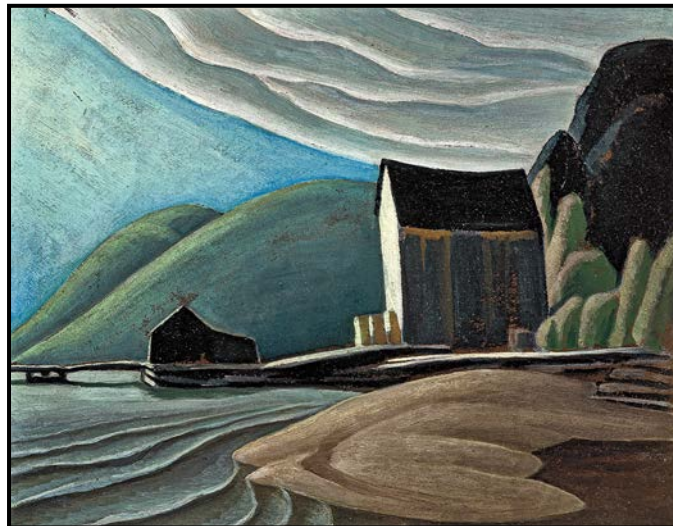


"Lake in the Woods", A.Y. Jackson, 1922

Tom Thomson, whose name is often considered synonymous with the Group of Seven, was not actually a member. He had died in a canoeing accident in 1917, three years before the Group formally came into being. However, Thomson was influential in shaping the Group's collective vision and artistic style. Before amalgamating as the Group of Seven, the artists often met at Toronto's Arts and Letters Club, at Harris' Toronto mansion or, later, in the Studio Building Harris had constructed for the Group, where they discussed ideas and techniques, provided mutual support and critiqued one another's work.

All but Harris, who was independently wealthy, supported themselves by working as commercial artists or art teachers, some by writing or lecturing. They spent

much of their free time painting, at first in and around Toronto. However, they soon realized that, if they were to claim to be Canada's first National School of Painters, they would have to paint more of Canada. They began travelling and painting together in the Laurentians, Algonquin Park and around Georgian Bay. As years went by, members of the Group ventured farther afield to Quebec and the Maritimes, to the north shore of Lake Superior, to the prairies, the West Coast and the Arctic. Although they considered themselves a "landscape school", their subject matter included urban (and rural) architecture, industrial sites, and people. Varley, in particular, was renowned for his portraiture.



"The Ice House", Lawren S. Harris, 1925

They were heavily influenced by Art Nouveau, by the techniques of the European post-impressionists and by the Canadian painters who predated them, artists who shared a belief that colour and texture in art could elicit emotion and convey meaning. In 1913, Harris and MacDonald visited the Exhibition of Contemporary Scandinavian Art in Buffalo. The Scandinavians' style had a huge impact on the two men, the "sense of mystery embedded in the rawness of nature ...touched a nerve..." (Silcox, p.18).

A shared vision emerged, one that rejected the popular 19th century notion that artists must realistically represent their subjects. Intrigued by the transcendentalist ideology of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, they painted not what they saw but what they felt. Much of their early work used bright colours and thickly textured paint (impasto) to capture the essence of the Canadian landscapes in which they immersed themselves. In 1921 Harris, profoundly impacted by the starkness of Lake Superior's north shore, began to simplify the colour and composition of his work using thinner pigment and increasingly-stylized forms. MacDonald, Carmichael and Varley soon followed his lead.



"Girl in Red", F.H. Varley, 1920/1921

The Group came together first and foremost to promote their work which, to begin with, had largely been rejected by critics. In the early 20th century, Canadian art collectors remained conservative in their views about what constituted fine art. The Group did garner the support of Eric Brown, then Director of the National Gallery of Canada, who purchased a number of their canvasses for the gallery's collection. He also ensured that they were well-represented in art shows in Canada, at the esteemed Wembley exhibition in London where critics responded enthusiastically, as well as in the US, around Great Britain and in Paris.



"Northern Silver Mine", Franklin Carmichael, c. 1930

The Group was determined that the world recognize and value Canadian art. While they promoted their own work, they also committed to supporting other Canadian artists who were their contemporaries. They curated eight

exhibitions between 1920 and 1933, all but one of which included a significant number of guest artists. Interestingly, although many of these guests over the years were women, the Group never admitted women into its membership. Even Emily Carr, who met with them in Ottawa in 1927 during an exhibition of her work at the National Gallery and who was told by Harris, "You are one of us," was never invited into the fold.



"Beaver Dam and Birches", J.E.H. MacDonald, c. 1919

The Group firmly believed that art should be accessible to the masses. They encouraged public institutions, libraries, schools and museums, to purchase Canadian artists' work. In 1928, the National Gallery sent reproductions of some of the Group's work to schools across the country including postcard-sized versions so that children could have their own Group of Seven collections.

Group members were passionate outdoorsmen who believed that "distinct Canadian art [should] be developed through direct contact with nature" (Wikipedia). Canadian artists continue to be inspired by their quintessentially Canadian style but also by their enthusiasm and determination to popularize a Canadian artistic identity.

Scroll through some of the artists' work in The McMichael Canadian Art Collection at mcmichael.com/collection/group-of-seven. For more details on the Group of Seven look them up online in The Canadian Encyclopedia, The Art History Archive, or go to thegroupofseven.ca. David P. Silcox's book *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson* (Firefly Books Ltd. 2003) contains some excellent full-page reproductions of paintings by all ten members.

All images used by permission of the copyright holders, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, ON., except "Ice House" copyright by the Family of Lauren Harris. Image information is available here: tiny-url.com/yxzs5ge7.

Painted Images

by Richard James

The January 2021 theme competition is “Homage to the Group of Seven”. The article “Group of Seven” on page 20 of this issue of *Close-Up* provides a very brief overview of the work of this group of renowned Canadian artists. I made a presentation to the October member’s night meeting on “Painted Images” and this article is a sequel to that presentation.

Let me start with the question: What is the difference between a painter and a photographer? A painter includes in their image only what they wish to show from the scene before them as they imagined they saw it. A photographer has to try to simplify or exclude image components that are not part of the story.

There are a number of ways of simplifying an image including reduction to a low level of detail, which may include posterization that is, reducing the number of colours or tones to typically between two and about ten, or doing what painters do, leave out the detail and use broad brush-strokes to show the structure of the image.



“Creyke Point, East Sooke Reg. Park” (Painter)

For the purpose of this article my assumption is that you wish to convert a photograph to a more painting-like presentation rather than start from scratch with a painting.

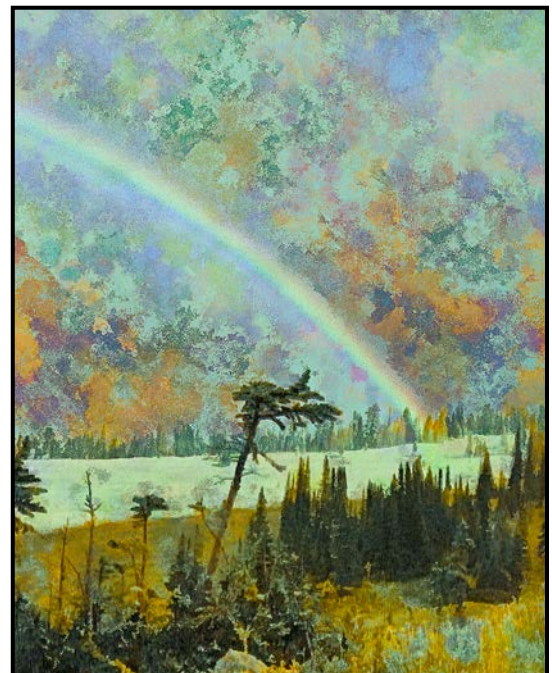
There are a number of tools at our disposal including the brush tool in Photoshop, and similar software, that allow you to paint with brush-strokes on a layer that may be overlaying an underlying photograph. This is extremely flexible as you can import and use many different brush styles.

To use a brush in Photoshop simply open the brushes palette, select your brush, adjust the settings, then paint away. You might find that a graphics tablet is eas-

ier to use for this than a mouse and if you’re serious about painting you will probably purchase one. In addition to the brushes supplied by Adobe you can create and save your own or import those made available by other Photoshop users.

Photoshop also has a “Filter Gallery”, accessible under “Filter” on the main menu. Unfortunately, this is still restricted to 8-bit mode. (Come on Adobe, time to update this.) These filters include some artistic interpretations as well as brush strokes and textures. In addition to this gallery there are other filters that do not necessarily require 8-bit mode. These include the well-known “Oil Paint” filter found under Filter/Stylize/Oil Paint. These filters have various parameters you can adjust but they are certainly not as flexible as the software designed specifically for painting.

But I’m not a painter you say! Don’t worry, there’s a solution to this problem. As I am not a painter either, I’ve explored three options. These are Filter Forge (FF), Corel Painter/Essentials (Painter) and Dynamic Auto-Painter (DAP). All have free demos and are frequently discounted so wait for the right price.



“Fall in the Meadows, Banff Nat Park, AB.” (DAP)

Strictly speaking Filter Forge (filterforge.com) is not really a painting program. It is an extensive programming language with over 13,000 scripts available for free download. You can use the scripts, modify them or make your own creative interpretations.

The scripts are set up using a graphic interface where you select a particular control and link it to an input and output on the screen. Most controls have variable par-

ameters. This is the easiest way of modifying an existing script. Almost anything that can be described can probably be programmed into Filter Forge.

Corel Painter (painterartist.com, Painter Essentials is a restricted-function version) is designed for painting and also has a number of built-in presets. You can also purchase additional preset packs to give you more flexibility.

In painting mode you can select your brush, adjust its parameters and paint away. A useful feature is “Tracing Paper” which reduces the opacity of the layer you are painting on so that you can see what is underneath, really useful if you’re painting over an image. Painter also has an “Auto Paint” mode where you select from a number of presets that the program runs automatically. You can purchase and install more presets.



“Sunflower” (DAP)

You can paint new layers over old layers and save the file in Corel’s proprietary RIFF format which saves the painting instructions as well as the image. To work on the image in another program you must save it as a TIF file.

Painter has a few limitations including that the input image must be flat, uncompressed and in 8-bit sRGB mode. You have to create a separate version of your image to work on in Painter, then convert the output back if you want to work on it in your normal bit-depth and colourspace.

Dynamic Auto-Painter (DAP) (mediachance.com) takes quite a different approach to painting. It does not rearrange or process the actual photo pixels or use filters to create the “feel” of the painting. Instead, it repaints the image using the photo as a guide, while reducing the complexity of the scene and removing unimportant details. To do this it uses stylistic components developed from the work of well-known painters or those you have created yourself.

DAP includes a template editor to allow you to modify the presets, or create new ones, and save them. This includes access to a component called “Photo-Reactor” which allows you to program more complex functions. In

some ways these editors are similar to the editor in Filter Forge in that they are graphics-based where you link the steps together in a workflow.

Image sizing in DAP is a little different. It works with the relationship between the file size and brush size (in pixels) and the size at which the image is to be viewed on a monitor or as a large print. If the output size is too large and the viewing size is significantly smaller, the result is that the image scaling results in details that were visible becoming too small, indistinct or missing.



“Cattleman’s Cabin, Jardine, MT.” (FilterForge)

Now, some finishing touches to perfect the image. Although you have set up the program to produce a usable painted image it may require further work. Some of this can be done within the program, especially in DAP. However, I like to do a number of things in Photoshop after the basic image has been produced.

Firstly, I convert the image to my working bit depth (16-bit) and colourspace (ProPhoto) to ensure compatibility when I bring in the original image. If the image needs resizing this would also be done here. The painted image may require fine-tuning using levels or curves adjustment layers, or colour adjustment using the HSL adjustment layer.

I then bring in the original image underneath the painted image. I can now blend the two images together to show some of the original details underneath the painted version. This can add a little realism to the painting if that is your objective. The choice of blend mode for this depends on the image content and what you’re trying to do with it (see the “Blend Modes” article on page 5 of this issue). Generally, I end up with an opacity somewhere between 70 and 90% for the painted layer if I want some of the original detail to show through.

I hope this article, and the article on the Group of Seven, have given you some ideas which you can translate into painterly interpretations of your photographic work.

Photo Tours

by Jim Gardner

Travel photography has a new face with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel restrictions, limitations and conditions of exposure have changed the playing field from global to local. Management of the virus and vulnerabilities through public health measures, testing, immunization and therapies, may produce a return to a global playing field or a facsimile thereof. In this context, I reflect on travel photography as part of adventure/expedition cruising on small vessels with specific reference to the Southern Ocean and Antarctica. The intent is to provide considerations to entertain before joining a cruise. This cruise activity has blossomed in recent decades but now presents a difficult management challenge with most companies having cancelled their 2020-21 season.



"Southern Ocean Treasure: Wandering Albatross"

Many types of photography are undertaken during these cruises including personal documentary images, personally designed or guided photo tours, educational/research images, photo workshops, and videography. It is not uncommon for cruises to have aboard a range of beginning photographers to award-winning professionals.

Small-ship adventure or expedition cruising has some distinguishing characteristics. It occurs in remote areas known for wildlife, geological and historical features, etc. in northern Canada, Greenland and Svalbard, Galapagos and Chilean Fjords, for example. The Southern Ocean and Antarctica are prime and diverse destinations. Usually departing from the ports of Ushuaia, Argentina, or Punta Arenas, Chile, cruises of 10 to 15 days cross the Drake Passage to the South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic Peninsula. Some companies offer flights to King George Island, avoiding the Drake Passage crossing, with shorter cruises in the South Shetlands and Antarctic Peninsula

region. Longer cruises of up to 22 days incorporate visits to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula.



"Whaling History in a Volcano: Deception Island"

Since 1961 all activity South of latitude 60°S is regulated under the Antarctic Treaty and the related agreements that, together, comprise the Antarctic Treaty System. Activity in the Falkland Islands and South Georgia is regulated by their respective governments. Subject to these regulatory authorities, the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) provides operational protocols, guidance, management and certification functions to its members. IAATO, now with over 100 members, was formed in 1991 in response to the growth of cruising in the region. In 1992-93, 10 member companies operated 12 ships making 59 voyages with 6704 passenger landings. In 2019-20, comparable numbers were 46 operators, 63 ships, 432 voyages, 59,367 passenger landings (IAATO). Apart from a few deep continental excursions these data largely represent cruise activity in the Antarctic Peninsula and adjacent Southern Ocean.

Vessels ranging in capacity from a dozen to 500 passengers offer open-shore landings, hikes, ship and zodiac cruising, kayaking, camping, ski touring, and scuba diving. Most cruises include a wide-ranging educational component focused on relevant biology, geology, meteorology, history, and environmental issues. Days at sea usually include bird and whale watching and photographic opportunities. Some cruises offer involvement in citizen science research projects. Excepting very small vessels, these activities are facilitated and supervised by expedition staff distinct from the ship's crew. The expedition staff may include subject specialists, guides, photographer/photo coach, doctor, and service manager all supervised by an expedition leader who works with the ship's captain and crew to facilitate the activities.

Shore landings are a central activity. The number of ships at landing sites per day, timing of visits, and number of



"Antarctic Continental Landing: Neko Harbour"

passengers ashore at a time and over a day vary among sites. One hundred passengers ashore at a time and three ships of 500 or less capacity per day are maximum limits but many sites have lower limits. For passengers waiting for a landing, zodiac cruising and other activities are usually available. Zodiac cruising can be a rewarding experience for viewing and photographing marine wildlife and ice formations. With landing site and other limitations, ships of 200 passengers capacity or less are optimal for maximizing activities. In some cases, on South Georgia, for example, ships of 100 or less capacity may be optimal.

Based on past experience and likely future travel scenarios, I offer some considerations. Firstly, ships present particularly risky environments for all infectious diseases and the cruise industry generally has been careful to mitigate such risks. However, COVID-19 presented new challenges. The abandonment of the 2020-21 Southern Ocean and Antarctic season is a consequence of this. Travel to/from ports of embarkation/disembarkation is presently restricted. New travel regulations and protocols



"Beach Activity on South Georgia"

will be more restrictive and will impose new costs on the cruise industry possibly limiting cruise capacity and raising prices. Carefully review new travel regulations and protocols as they are enacted and applied by tour operators and consult with your physician.

Choose a cruise company that is a member of IAATO and has a favourable record and reviews. IAATO helps ensure quality control and compliance with the Antarctic Treaty System and other regulatory authorities. Bookings may be made through agents but it is advantageous to be able to communicate directly with the company/operator offering the cruise. Access their websites. Check the ship layout, especially for publicly available outside deck space to maximize viewing and photography. Favour companies that include a dedicated expedition doctor in addition to a ship's doctor and those that have a photographer/photo coach. Companies should be forthcoming in providing information and requirements for outdoor clothing and gear, especially with respect to warmth and waterproofing and the company should provide suitable footwear for landings.



"Cruising Antarctic Peninsula"

This environment offers new photographic challenges including protection and repair of equipment, that an expedition photographer may assist with. If you have scientific/environmental interests, choose companies that operate citizen science programs. If time and resources permit, choose a cruise that includes South Georgia to maximize wildlife viewing and photography. Consider using a combination of your usual DSLR, point and shoot camera, phones, and Go Pros, with waterproofing provisions. The ability to react quickly bears fruit as photographic opportunities in this environment are often unanticipated and fleeting and you may be in a position where it is not possible to set up properly, for example in a zodiac. Finally, it is very important to manage travel plans to minimize jet lag and fatigue prior to embarkation and motion sickness during the cruise. Bon voyage, hopefully!

Beginner's Corner: Composition

by Joseph Finkleman

One way to achieve optimal “sharpness” as a compositional tool is to use light. There are three lighting directions. Light coming from behind you, sliding over your shoulder This is flat light. It is rarely preferred. Light makes drama. Drama adds power to the story. Flat light almost always subtracts drama. The second direction, one with a fair amount of power, is back light. Back lighting is a difficult exposure situation, but when used well it is a very powerful addition to the power of the image. Manage your exposure precisely when you use this technique.

My “go-to” lighting solution is almost always cross lighting which adds power to the image by creating and emphasizing texture. Texture adds to the illusion of “sharpness” and, when coupled with selective focus and a tight composition, will add the greatest amount of power out of all of the compositional tools available.

I have read a myriad of articles, books, and “rules” on the making of an image. Almost all of these invoke the dreaded “Rule of Thirds.” While it is one of many effective tools, it has acquired a sort of god-like status I find objectionable. Asymmetry adds tension. Tension adds drama.

The suggestion of thirds works because it adds power but so does a perfectly static image with the subject centred, as do a myriad of other possibilities, including the entire composition being displayed just on the edges with the middle of the image as negative space.

No one rule is sacrosanct nor is any given rule the “right” one for the story being presented. This is why knowing the story and refining the story is so crucial. It is the single most important compositional element in the image.

There are only so many choices as to where to place the subject and each one has power and the probability of success. If one places the subject dead centre and uses leading lines to draw the eye directly to the subject, the result will probably be a strong composition. It will also contain the subject within the frame, yet another strong compositional tool.

If you place the subject all along the edges and leave the middle as negative space, the image can be dramatic. It also is fraught with chances to fail. This technique is a low percentage tool and one that needs a lot of practice to master. Any unconventional approach done well is very powerful, however, there is a steep learning curve.

Static compositions are in the middle ground of difficulty and power. They are easy to do but not easy to do well. This technique needs practice and here, the story is absolutely crucial.

That leaves asymmetrical compositions. The more asymmetrical the image the greater the need for balance using tone or colour, and preferably, all black or all white negative space. Like many of the unconventional compositional tools this one also needs practice. It must add to the power of the story or it is superfluous.



“Birds”

That leaves the dreaded suggestion of thirds. It is a gentle asymmetry and is easy to achieve. It has a very high percentage of success. It is also the most over-worked tool in existence today. Not all images do well with this technique though most images do. It is important to learn the technique.

One last tool is the use of leading lines and/or selective tonal values as structure. Leading lines are found frequently in the setting and using them strongly leads the eye to the subject.

Learning how to recognize and work with leading lines will add a powerful tool to your kit. What about the situation where there aren't any leading lines? How else to add power to the subject? Selective burning and dodging (lightening and darkening) will also create a pathway for the eye to go right to the subject. Always remember that tone does all of the work in your composition, yet hue always gets the credit.

In summary, by importance: #1 story, #2 isolating the subject, #3 lighting the subject for the most power, #4 placing the subject in the frame so as to add the greatest power to the story, #5 using the minor collection of tools such as leading lines, repetition, tone, colour etc. For the greatest growth, I think one should use all of the techniques. The larger your toolkit, the easier it is to tell the story.

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