Close-Up

VictoriaCameraClub.ca

Photographing an Eclipse
Timbucktu
Workshops
Smart Objects in Photoshop
Creative Portraits
Member Profile: Kevin Keliher
That Remote Feeling
iPhone Photography
How I Did It
Beach Photography
Beginner's Corner: Portraits

"New Day" by Jason Frank

Victoria Camera Club

March 2021 Volume 74 Number 3

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Victoria Camera Club

"Black Oystercatchers" by Alec Lee

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, $85; Family, $107; Student, $36.

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

Close-Up is the magazine of the Victoria Camera Club. Copyright ©, Victoria Camera Club, 2021, all rights reserved. Mailing address: PO Box 46035, RPO Quadra, Victoria, BC, V8T 5G7. Editor, Richard James, (*editor@victoriacameraclub.ca*) for submissions or advertising in ***Close-Up***. Deadline for submissions for the April 2021 issue is March 1st 2021.

For additional information: please contact:
Membership: *membership@victoriacameraclub.ca*
Workshops: *workshops@victoriacameraclub.ca*
Field Trips: *fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.ca*
Meetings: *meetings@victoriacameraclub.ca*
Website: *webmaster@victoriacameraclub.ca*
Close-Up: *editor@victoriacameraclub.ca*
President: *president@victoriacameraclub.ca*

What's Inside

Calendar and President's Message....4
Photographing an Eclipse....5
Timbucktu....6
Workshops....8
Smart Objects in Photoshop....9
Competition Info....10
Creative Portraits....17
Member Profile: Kevin Keliher....18
That Remote Feeling....19
iPhone Photography....20
How I Did It....22
Shoots Around Victoria....23
Beach Photography....24
Beginner's Corner: Portraits....26

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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).

Calendar

Our workshop and field trip program is too extensive to list in *Close-Up.* Please go to the calendar page on the website (*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. *Victoriacameraclub.ca/club/clubschedules.aspx.*

March 4th: Competition Night. February competition results. The Theme for March is "Night Photography"

March 11th: Presentation Night. Calgary-based professional photographer Lee Nordbyte will present "Bold Black and White Landscape Photography", stories of the Canadian Rockies and roads less travelled.

March 18th: Members' Night. Presentations of members' images, field trip slide shows, prints or short technical presentations.

Workshop Highlights: The Final Touch, Finding the Extraordinary and Flash plus Portraits, Open (all levels) and Novice Image Review.

Field Trip Highlights: Cancelled until further notice.

Cover Image: "A New Day" by Jason Frank. This shot was about three weeks in the making. While visiting a friend I couldn't help noticing the amazing view, so I grabbed my phone and took a few snapshots.

I asked permission to come back one day, early, and was given the green light. Over the next few weeks I looked at my earlier phone shots, remembering the area, I knew exactly how and where I wanted to set up to get the look I had envisioned. Now, I just had to wait for the right day.

Finally, one early morning I could see this was going to be the day. Coffee in hand I jumped in the car and made my way to the View Royal area. I settled in on what I felt would give the me the look I wanted. A steady tripod, Nikon D750 with a Sigma 150-600 mm lens. For this shot I zoomed in to 310 mm, f8, 1/60th second. With a few minor tweaks in Lightroom, I could not be happier with the result.

Tip for sunrise/sunset photographs. Be early. "Golden Hour" can be unpredictable, and the colours can change so fast that you do not want to show up late to the party, as mother nature puts on quite a show. This image placed 3rd in the January Intermediate Open Competition.

President's Message

This month marks a year since the effects of the pandemic were felt by the Club. In that year we have made the transition from meeting in-person to providing Club activities online and I do have to say that we did it masterfully. As I write this, we are still unable to meet up in person, even with social distancing, but I am looking forward to the time when we can get together again and see one another either at a workshop, field trip or a Norway House meeting. Until then, I will enjoy our online workshops, speakers, and Thursday meetings through Zoom.

One upcoming event that I am looking forward to is the next speaker in the BC/Yukon Interclub Speaker Series taking place on March 26th. Tri-Cities Photography Club will be hosting Laura Letinsky's presentation titled, "A Proposition, or the Allure of Photography". There are some member-led workshops also happening in March that I would like to bring to your attention. Neil Boyle will be giving his always popular, "The Final Touches" workshop and local photographer Mike Byrne will introduce us to Flash plus Portraiture. The competitions committee will also have their image reviews which are always helpful in improving our images.

Around this time of the year the President's Message in *Close-Up* makes mention of the one thing that makes our Club run, volunteers. Our Club is fortunate to have an excellent group of individuals who work countless hours to make everything in the Club run smoothly. Without them we would not be able to offer everything that we do but, as is the case with many Clubs, it is often the same group of people who volunteer their time year after year to help keep our Club viable. If you are new to the Club, consider joining one of our many committees. It is a great way to get to know other members of the Club.

As we start getting closer to the Annual General Meeting some of our volunteers may be thinking about stepping down from their positions. I encourage all members, especially those who have not volunteered in the past, to think about what you get from the Club and consider giving back by filling a role next year. By becoming an active participant, you can have a positive impact through your contribution.

I encourage everyone to get out and photograph our lovely city and the surrounding area. You never know when you might get that award-winning photo!

Teri VanWell, President.

Photographing an Eclipse

by W. John McDonald

People who witness a total eclipse of the sun never forget the experience. Some become "chasers" travelling across the world to catch fleeting glimpses of this spectacle. Photographing an image is challenging as there are usually only a few minutes of totality thus you want to take a series of HDR exposures covering as much as 10 stops to be able to capture the incredible range of brightness of the corona.

Most seasoned observers will tell you that seeing it is so important that you should leave your camera home. I know it is good advice and may even follow it if I get another opportunity. However, getting photographs of these rare events is worthwhile.

The first two images were taken on August 21, 2017 at Monmouth, OR. with a DSLR attached to a small telescope with a 480 mm focal length and f6 fixed aperture on a tracking mount. A telephoto lens would also work. Nine exposures ranging from 0.8 to 1/2000th second at ISO 200 were taken. They were processed using a radial blur to bring out the subtle structures in the corona.

"Solar Prominences"

The first image shows a single short exposure emphasizing prominences flaring out from the solar disk. It is fortunate that the size of the moon's shadow on the sun is almost a perfect fit in total eclipses allowing the prominences to show up well.

The corona seen in the second image is a blend of all nine exposures. The corona is always present but is much dimmer than the solar disk so can only be photographed during an eclipse. The Mr. Eclipse website (*mreclipse.com*) is a good planning resource with information on everything from dates and weather to camera settings.

"Solar Corona"

Lunar eclipses are also well worth photographing. They are more frequent and last longer because the earth's shadow is much larger than the moon and takes longer to cross it. One striking effect in lunar eclipses is the colour changes that occur with the moon turning to a red or orange depending on the condition of the earth's atmosphere at the time.

The main challenge is getting the exposure right for all the stages of the eclipse. As the moon is full (it always is for an eclipse), it is about the same brightness as the sky on a clear day. With a dark sky background it is important to use manual settings to reduce the exposure. As the eclipse begins the exposure needs to be increased considerably. Fortunately, there is time to check the image and correct the exposure as needed.

The third image shows an eclipse taken from Valdes Island, BC in 2007. A 300 mm lens was used with a tripod mounted DSLR camera. Several exposures were taken as the eclipse progressed from full moon to totality. They were scaled in size before blending to make the image shown. Happy hunting for your own moon or sun eclipses.

"Lunar Eclipse Sequence"

Timbucktu

by Willie Waddell

Timbuktu, the mysterious City of Gold, has become over the centuries synonymous with isolation and inaccessibility. So, to fly there seemed almost sacrilegious. The Oxford dictionary still defines it as a "remote or extremely distant place". To get there the slow and uncomfortable way by river seemed the romantic if not entirely sensible option. However, it was an opportunity to learn about the lifestyle of the Bozo tribe who inhabit the riverbanks and the many obstacles the people who "discovered" this fabled city encountered along the way.

An extremely important part of this trip was researching the history. If you just landed in Timbuktu, you would see a sprawling city of around 30,000 people surrounded on all sides by sand. The streets and alleys are a disjointed maze of dirt roads, littered with famous homes and historic buildings. Most buildings are built out of traditional mud brick. It would be very easy to miss these buildings of historic significance which made Timbuktu a World Heritage Site.

"Bozo Village"

In 2009 I travelled to Mali, the Jewel of West Africa, for the Niger Musical Festival which was held every two years on the banks of the Niger River at Segou. Music is the soul of Mali, disputedly the home of Jazz and Blues by the Griots, traditional musicians.

Mali was for centuries on a trade route for gold and salt, and eventually slaves, from West Africa up through the Sahara Desert to North Africa. Now, only small camel trains still carry large blocks of salt from Taoudenni, 700 km north of Timbuktu, across the Sahara Desert dunes and shifting seas of sand. The blocks are then shipped south to markets such as the one at Mopti. As recently as the 1970s the workforce consisted of political prisoners, criminals, debtors and others who were not there by choice. The camel trains would often have up to 400 camels. For many years European explorers tried to reach the mysterious City of Gold, Timbuktu, but most met their fate by disease, murder and betrayal. Timbuktu, sitting on the edge of the southern Sahara was a place of mystery and intrigue for centuries. Mali was governed by warring Kingdoms with a colourful cast of heroes and villains. It wasn't until 1827 that the first Europeans finally discovered the mysterious City of Gold. Timbuktu is still a place of mystery and intrigue even to this day.

"Tuareg Camel Drivers"

In the 16th century this thriving Muslim center of learning had a University with a massive library and 25,000 students. They amassed thousands of priceless documents. Dating from the 12th to the 19th centuries, the manuscripts covered Islamic theology and law, philosophy and logic, medical science and mathematics, philology and grammar. One magnificent book was the Koran written on the delicate and hairless skin of unborn lambs. Timbuktu was also a cultural and religious center with three remarkable mosques made of straw and mud still standing, some dating back to the 14th century.

When Al Qaeda raided the area from the north in 2012, they tried to erase the culture; they burned the libraries and imposed Sharia Law. Fortunately, by then thousands of the manuscripts had been smuggled out by the "Badass Librarians" of Timbuktu. We visited a small museum where a few manuscripts were displayed.

Music was forbidden by Al Qaeda and the two world famous music festivals; the Festival of The Desert in Timbuktu and the Festival of the Niger are no more. The population, once over 50,000, has dwindled to 32,000. Tourism, which had been a main source of income and development, is no longer considered safe. While modern life encroaches, most of the population consists of Tuaregs, who are part of the Berber ethnic group and

mostly Muslim, many living on the outskirts in camps, tents and mud brick dwellings on the edge of the desert. The city itself sprawls over quite an area and is a mix of traditional mud brick buildings and scattered more modern official buildings.

"Mosque Timbuktu"

As part of our 2009 trip, we spent three days on the Niger River travelling to Timbuktu in a traditional small wooden river boat called a Pinasse. The Niger River, which once reached Timbuktu, has, over many years, changed course and now flows 20 km to the south. The Saharan sand constantly changes the course of the river and creates new sand bars.

"Captain and Pinasse "

We boarded the boat in Mopti at the site of a massive riverbank market where salt is still a major commodity. We then set off with some trepidation. The crew consisted of the captain who sat on the bow watching for sand bars and hippopotami, the driver, the cook who worked out of a galley smaller than a broom closet and, most importantly, the bailer, whose only job was to keep the vessel afloat.

Each night we camped on the riverbank in tents, enjoying glorious sunsets and sunrises. For the river part of the trip I was using a large DSLR camera with several lenses and filters. One of my filters met an untimely end when I dropped it and it went right through the bottom of the boat into the river! My second camera was a "point and shoot" which ultimately proved its worth both on the river and in Timbuktu when sand was blowing into everything and a small camera was more discreet to shoot with. Unlike many of the people that I have encountered in Africa the Tuaregs avoided being photographed.

"Desert Dwellings Timbuktu"

Words fail to capture the days on the river, the sights and sounds while passing boats with colourful makeshift sails, piled high with wildly-dressed people who waved, played raucous music and sang, animals going off to market, cargo, beautiful shore birds and the Bozo fishermen in skiffs. There were frequently groups of hippopotami watching as we glided by. The Bozo tribe live in various-sized clan villages in straw huts, along the bank. Each day we visited larger villages with noisy colourful markets, saw the homes of famous Mali musicians and observed centuries old traditions. One day we witnessed a Puel tribe cattle drive where hundreds of animals were being herded over the river by colourful Tuaregs, the Blue Men of the Desert.

Photography is challenging in a foreign country with extreme differences in culture, religion and language. Being informed before you travel is helpful to avoid problems. It is important to ask permission even by hand gestures or smiles, not be overly intrusive, and be prepared to politely back off. No photo is worth offending another person. In Islamic cultures photos may be strictly frowned upon.

Working quickly with a minimum of gear and avoiding flash by increasing the ISO helps you blend in. Colourful, chaotic markets often present the best opportunities to take photos, share the digital display, and interact with locals.

Workshops

by Jim Fowler

The past year has been, for many members, a time for honing those computer skills necessary to process digital images. On March 1st, the workshop committee brings you another installment of Neil Boyle's, "The Final Touches". For those who have attended earlier sessions, you know that Neil is skilled at taking an image from, "It's okay but it needs more something." to a finished photograph.

This requires two skills: you have to know how to work in your chosen photo editing programme, whether Lightroom, Photoshop, Capture 1, or some other programme, and you also have to learn to look at your photo objectively and decide what is needed to improve it. Sometimes you have included an element that, in and of itself, is an interesting object, but does it distract the viewer from the main subject? Do you even know what your subject is? Do you have the discipline to eliminate distractions and the skill to highlight what you meant to be the highlight? Neil follows through this process before your very eyes. I have attended his workshops several times and it is always a pleasure to see him transform a photo.

On March 15th the workshop committee will present Brenda Tharp. Forced in 2020 to forgo the international pursuit of extraordinary landscapes and wildlife, Brenda's solution was to turn to what was right around her. It may not surprise you to learn that she counts Freeman Patterson among her contemporaries with whom she shares the pursuit of light, shape, pattern and gesture. You don't need to fly to Kenya or sail to Antarctica; it is all here where you live, if only you would see it. Brenda's workshop is another example of the wonderful opportunity made possible by the enforced stay-at-home regime that has made the past year like no other year any of us can remember.

Brenda's one-hour presentation will be followed with an opportunity for questions and answers. Go to Brenda's website (*brendatharp.com*) to see her fine art prints and stock photography including her wildlife and landscape work. Her clients have included National Geographic, Lindblad Expeditions, Chromazone Publishing, Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Michelin Travel Publications, and Chronicle Books.

Do you long for something less traditional, something really "out there"? You should mark your calendar for March 26th when Laura Letinsky will give a talk entitled, "A Proposition or, the Allure of Photography". Brenda has exhibited in the New York Museum of Modern Art, the Photographers Gallery in London, UK, and the John Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, to name just a few of her many exhibits. If you think that the recent speakers of international renown have opened your eyes, well, with apologies to Al Jolson, "You ain't seen nothing yet". (From the words of Al Jolson saying "You ain't heard nothing yet," that presaged the end of silent movies.)

When you first go to Laura's website (*lauraletinsky.com*) you might think that there is something wrong with your computer, or that her site is not displaying properly. The fact is that starting with her web design, everything Laura does is thought-provoking and different. She breaks all the rules. Images, objects, pieces of photographs, all are assembled in time-bending, perspective-warping assemblages that will stop you in your tracks. Like Bob Dylan's Mr. Jones, you know "Something is happening here, but you don't know what it is". (Bob Dylan, from the song Ballad of a Thin Man.)

Just the titles of her photographic collections ("Ill Form and Void Full", or "To Want for Nothing") suggest another world of things not usually considered as subjects for photography. How about some remnants of birthday cake with balloons and the dregs of wine on a rumpled tablecloth, as part of "The Dog and the Wolf" collection, or the empty rooms and offices with patched walls and footprints on the carpet, from "Somewhere, Somewhere"? I preferred the domestic remnants in "Hardly More Than Ever", whatever that means. You might prefer her cherry and pits on the edge of a table. Even the people, when they do appear, as in "Venus Inferred", have their unabashed nakedness surrounded with the detritus of everyday life.

Surely you have guessed by now that Laura has some impressive credentials that allow her the freedom to blow the world of photography, as we know it, to smithereens. She does. Starting from a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Manitoba, and a Master of Fine Arts from Yale University's School of Art, she is now a professor in the Department of Visual Art at the University of Chicago.

Finally, back here on earth, Mike Byrne will do a Zoom version of his popular workshop on flash portraiture. You should know how to operate your flash so don't buy a new unit the night before and expect him to teach you how to turn it on. If you are one of the many who have a flash, know some basics but never use it because it just seems to have too many options, then Mike is your guy. He believes in manual settings that you can use in almost any situation. I took my flash unit off the shelf when I took Mike's course and it is still a regular part of my kit. Mike's workshop is March 22nd and 29th. You must be available for both dates.

Smart Objects in Photoshop

by Richard James

You've probably seen the term "smart object" mentioned many times when discussing processing in Photoshop. It usually occurs in the context of, "make this into a smart object and then do 'something' to it". So, I'll start off by reviewing what a smart object is. Very simply, it is a container for one or more image elements that allows you to modify what is in the container without actually changing the contents.

This is really a very powerful tool as it enables you to do edits to the container that are non-destructive to the contents and allows you to go back and change them later. In this way, it is somewhat like how an adjustment layer works but they can work on more than one object at a time.

One of the really powerful aspects of this is that you can have multiple copies of the same smart object in an image file, apply different changes to them but then decide that you want to change the original content. If you do this then the content of all the copies of the smart object container are changed before the edits you applied to the container are made!

For example, let us say you have a flower as a smart object, you make several copies of it and then decide that the colours are not right, and you want to edit it. With a smart object you edit the contents of the smart object and you're done; all the other copies change to match. If you had just copied the flower, then you would have to change each one separately.

Now, you can extend that and create an un-linked copy that is not part of this chain. To do this, right-click on the smart object name and click on New Smart Object via Copy. This copy will allow you to change its contents or parameters without changing the object that you created it from. You can then change the flower in the previous example to yet another colour, warp it and create more copies of it to populate a field of flowers.

Another demonstration of its power is that if you transform (scale, distort, rotate, etc.) a smart object you can later transform it again and the whole process is non-destructive.

This means that when you downsized it you didn't actually change the pixel count in the contents, only in the way it was displayed. So, when you upsize it again your full resolution is still there.

You can do quite a few things with smart objects such as apply a mask, change blend mode, add adjustment layers and transform (scale, distort, flip etc.) to control the appearance of the object as if it was just another layer. Masks, blend modes and opacity all work the same way with smart objects and their contents as they do on a normal layer in Photoshop. This gives you a high degree of control over how the object is applied.

Smart objects can be internal (embedded) to an image file or external (linked). If they are external, then any changes applied to that external file will be applied to all copies of it when you open the file(s) containing the copies. This means you can reuse image elements across multiple files and only have to update one file.

Inside a smart object you can do various things with the contents including applying filters, adjustment layers, and replace the image object with a new object. You can also use smart objects when you are using external apps such as the DxO/NIK collection of filters. This makes your adjustments in the DxO/NIK filter editable, starting from where you left off, if you later decide you don't quite like the result.

When you use filters within a smart object they are called "smart filters". The contents of the smart object can be image layers, as well as objects such as PDFs, a video file or a raw file as well as text. For example, with the raw file as a smart object in a Photoshop file you can go directly back to ACR and change the raw file editing.

A smart object can contain multiple layers which can also be smart objects. By applying a change to the whole, you change each included object. You can also change each individual object within the smart object.

There are some restrictions on what you can do with a smart object. For example, you cannot edit the pixels of the contents from outside the smart object. This means you can't paint, dodge or burn, clone or use the extraction tools directly on the smart object. To do this you have to edit the contents. Although most filters work within smart objects a few don't (Lens Blur, Flame Picture Frame, Trees, and Vanishing Point).

Another gotcha is that if you use jpg images the changes are "baked-in" when you save the file and can no longer be edited. You can however use jpg objects but save the file as a tif/psd file.

For more detailed information Adobe's help file for smart objects is here: *helpx.adobe.com/ca/photoshop/using/create-smart-objects.html*.

Lion's Gate Celebration of Nature

by Leah Gray

The Victoria Camera Club recently won the Lion's Gate Celebration of Nature photographic competition, beating twenty-three other clubs from BC and the Yukon. The Lion's Gate Celebration of Nature Photographic Competition is one of the premier natural history contests held in Canada. The VCC has placed 1st or 2nd four times in the last five years. We have taken "1st Best in Show" three times in the last four years.

"Grizzly Cubs Play-fighting" by Steve Smith

This year, Steve Smith had the highest awarded image: 1st Best in Show with "Grizzly Cubs Play-fighting". This image was also 1st in Wildlife.

"Epic Struggle" by Evan Guengerich

Evan Guengerich had the 3rd Best in Show and 2nd in Wildlife with "Epic Struggle".

The other winning images were Lois Burton: Just Waiting, Christine Hutchins Gallagher: Off to Feed the Kids, Suzanne Huot: Otters Lunch on Ice, Leah Gray: Western Grebe Flight, Donna Christie: Blue Dasher: Nick Delany: Dancing a Duet. All images can be seen on our website in the Competitions gallery.

January 2021 Competition Judges

We sincerely thank our external judges for the January Intermediate and Advanced level competitions Mike Byrne, Dan Jones, Michael Breakey, Rick Leche, Larry Brietkreutz and Gregg Eligh. We also extend thanks to our in-house judges of all novice competitions and intermediate prints: Pam Irvine, Lorna Zaback, Leah Gray, and Nicci Tyndall. Images and judges' comments are available at: *victoriacameraclub.ca/Competitions/CompetitionResults.aspx*.

Mike Byrne: Wildlife. Mike is one of the co-founders of Clock Tower Images in Victoria. Mike 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 an emphasis on wildlife.

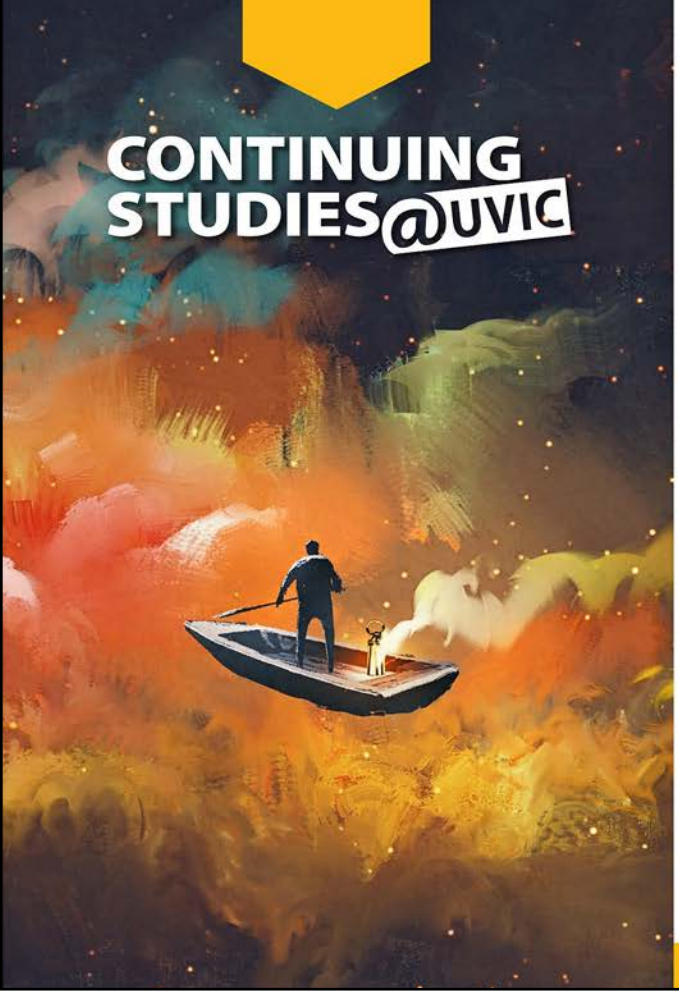
Dan Jones: Open. Dan has been a member of the Camera Club of Ottawa for 23 years and has achieved the level of Master Photographer. As a part-time professional photographer his work includes stock photo fine-art prints, and he enjoys judging for a variety of photo clubs.

Michael Breakey: Theme. (Homage to the Group of Seven.) Michael 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, which includes overseeing the judging course.

Rick Leche: People. Rick currently lives in Black Creek, BC and is an avid photographer of anything or everything. He never leaves home without his Canon gear, whether it is traveling around the world or around the Comox Valley.

Larry Brietkreutz: Altered Reality. Larry has enjoyed the inspiration and challenge of all types of artistic images, whether created with the camera, software, or brush and paint for over 35 years. He is a Certified CAPA Judge and teaches photography courses for Surrey Recreation. He is currently the Past-President of CAPA.

Gregg Eligh: Prints. Gregg is a good friend to the Club and well known around the Club for his judging over the years and his interesting workshops. He currently teaches continuing education photography courses at Camosun College. Gregg has worked across North America and the Caribbean doing corporate, editorial, catalogue and advertising photography.



Upcoming Visual Arts Courses

We are pleased to offer these online, live and interactive visual arts courses:

- iPhone/iPad Artography, with Tony Bounsall
- Advanced Methods of Portrait Drawing with Graphite, with Jeannette Sirois

The following courses will be offered at the UVic campus. Maximum enrolments are low and COVID protocols are in place:

- Keeping a Sketchbook: Be a Tourist in Your Hometown, with Trace Nelson
- Contemporary Chinese Brush Painting, with Andy Lou

continuingstudies.uvic.ca/visual

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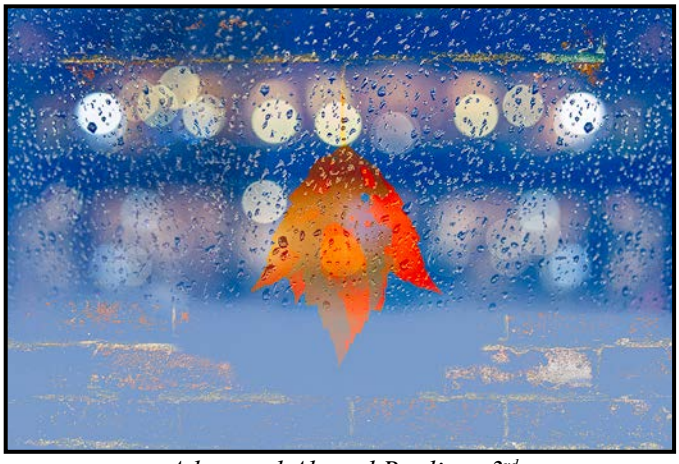


Advanced Altered Reality - 3rd
"November" by Kevin Keliher

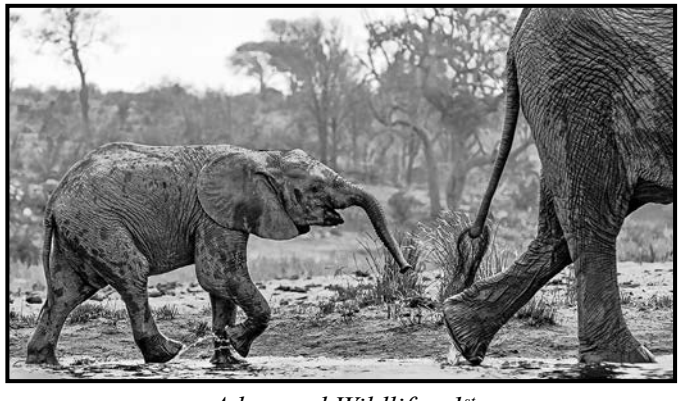
Judge's Comments: Good use of colours that instills an emotional reaction. The focal point is clear, although it is in the center it works here as the image is balanced and there are many interesting elements around it to add energy. Nice division of space created with varying colours in the background.

Advanced Open - 1st
"Avian Angel" by Suzanne Huot

Judge's Comments: An amazing capture of a subject that is a most difficult one to photograph successfully. This Hummingbird has been frozen in time as it extracts nectar from a single blossom. From the sharpness of every part of the bird, to the highlights in the eye, to the perfect, blurred green backdrop, the way the flower and bird lean toward each other, to form a triangular shape and the use of strong primary colours, these details all add up to an award-winning image. Congratulations to the photographer.

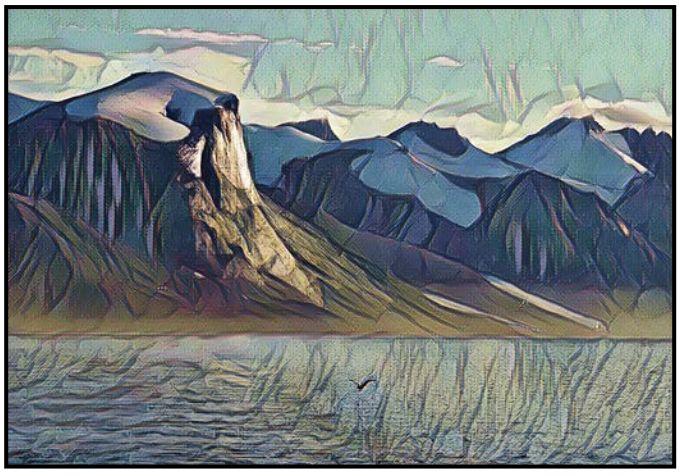
Advanced People - 1st
"Days End" by Cindy Stephenson

Judge's Comments: Great street photography scene, a wonderful B&W image. This image displays the peak of action and conveys a good story and instills an emotional reaction. Good use of light. Sharpness in critical areas adds to the impact. Original treatment of the subject with strong composition. Thanks for sharing!



Advanced Wildlife - 1st
"Not Too Fast Mommy" by Daniel Rondeau

Judge's Comments: The crop in this image really works for me. The monochrome treatment and the stark contrast between the elephants and the background add punch and drama. Great work!

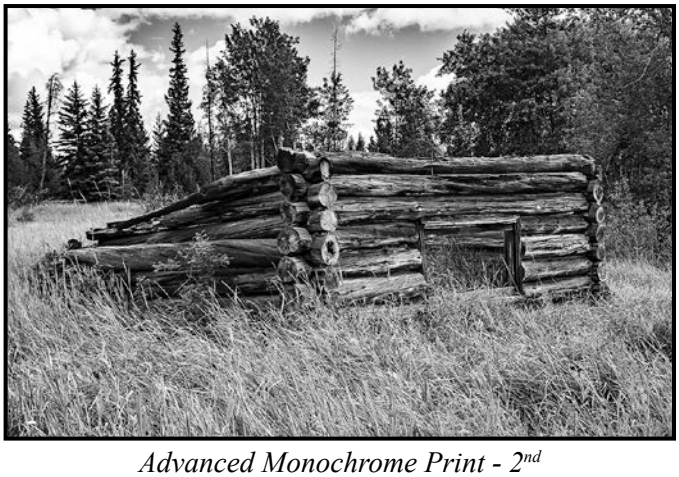


Advanced Theme - 1st
"My Lawren Harris - Baffin Island" by Garry Schaefer

Judge's Comments: Composition, colour palette, light and shadow all well done. The painterly quality of the brushwork with its shading and tonality are very pleasing.

Advanced Nature Print - 1st
"A River Runs Through It" by Mark Sicherman

Judge's Comments: This is a rich study of tone, texture and depth. Nicely composed.



Advanced Monochrome Print - 2nd
"Old Cariboo Shed" by Jacqui James

Judge's Comments: This is a rich study of texture, front to back. There is a crisp, clean focus here. This image has depth, something we all strive for. Very nicely printed.

Advanced Open Print - 2nd
"Mekong River Fishing Boat" by Tim Agoston

Judge's Comments: Excellent front to back focus creates great depth in this image. Your close camera angle and composition draws in the viewer and the texture provides the interest.

Intermediate Altered Reality - 1st
"Trembling" by Mary Weir

Judge's Comments: Original treatment of a common subject. Good use of light and strong composition that instills an emotional reaction. Full of action and drama. Excellent division of space with the blossom placed in the dark area of the background. An intriguing image.

Intermediate Open - 1st
"The Tunnel" by Graham Budd

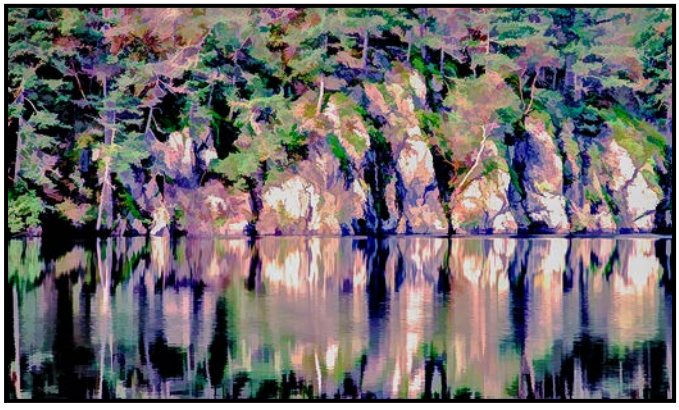
Judge's Comments: This intriguing black and white image draws the viewer into the scene with its great depth and perspective and the repetitive alteration of light and shadows. The bench adds an item of interest in the foreground and provides strong leading lines which direct the eye into the tunnel. The silhouetted person in the distance serves as a centre of interest and creates an element of mystery to the composition. Wonderful play of light and a great find. Congratulations to the photographer for this winning creation.

Intermediate Nature - 1st
"Grizzly Twins" by Lorna Scott

Judge's Comments: The eyes have it! I love the pose of the right-most bear while the second cub looks characteristically awkward. The falling water droplets are great. This is a really nice image.

Intermediate Open Print
"Common Green Bottle Fly (Lucilia Sericata)"
by John Clarke

Judge's Comments: A remarkable capture of a fly. A good attempt at a difficult subject! The iridescence of the fly is eye-catching.



Intermediate Theme - 1st
"Group of Seven at Thetis Lake" by Peter Amundsen

Judge's Comments: Good composition. The shore and its reflection are well handled. The brush strokes are well done. An interesting colour palette, especially in the handling of shadows and shaded areas.

Novice Nature - 1st
"Common Starling" by Maureen Reid

Judge's Comments: A pleasing shot of a common bird, well done! The maker has brought out the beautiful sheen on this bird's breast. The perch is interesting, and the bird is nicely isolated. The two-tone clean background creates interest. The exposure, depth-of-field and light are perfect, and the bird's posture is good.

Intermediate People - 1st
"Thailand Girl" by Wendy Clay

Judge's Comments: The image conveys a good story with good use of cropping and lighting. The strong composition instills an emotional reaction with great cute factors in this image. Very pleasing and heart warming. Thanks for sharing!

Novice Open - HM
"Happiness in Himalayas" by Merna Forster

Judge's Comments: What a great smile from this cute subject sitting upon their pony. You've done well to catch the subject's face mostly in shadow. The background places the subject nicely in their environment, showing us their lifestyle. The bright hard light and the ponies sleepy look adds to the story. This photo's depth of field, lighting, colours, and focus are all strong.

Novice People - 1st
"GYOJI: A Sumo Referee" by Joanne Couch

Judge's Comments: A good moment has been captured in this action-packed image. The gesture of a lifted foot, the referee's expression and a clear moment of action between the wrestlers indicate a good sense of timing by the image-maker.

Novice Open Print
"Utopia" by Robert Paterson

Judge's Comments: A pleasant scene with good repetition of colour throughout the image. The image is sharp, and the buildings are vertical. The branches on the left and right frame the image nicely.

Novice Theme 2nd
"Bare Pine – Misty Pond" by Tom Stewart

Judge's Comments: The autumnal hues, the soft light, the mist coming off the water as it subtly reflects the trees on the far bank, this could be a painting done by one of the Group of Seven. Nicely done! The burnt orange foliage on the tree in the bottom right is mirrored by some of the trees across the water, giving a sense of balance to the frame.

Creative Portraits

by Lorna Scott ACAPA

There are many types of creative images, some are created in camera, but mostly they are combined with other elements to create an altered look. I will talk about the altered look as the whole subject of creative images can go in many different directions.

"Butterfly Dreams"

To start the process, you must first have a concept and a main focal point. It is helpful to have this idea in your mind or, in some cases, sketched. It does not mean that you cannot change directions midway!

The whole thing usually begins, in my case, with an image of a model. If you have a certain concept in mind, it's easy to have them pose in a way that lends itself to your vision. Many of my creative images originate in my small home studio using a plain background. It is much easier to extract the model when shot on a plain background.

"Dancing in the Clouds"

For the altered look you will need to have an archive of components available. That includes various location shots and props. I often find myself taking images of very weird items that may come in handy. Antique shops are excellent places to find many interesting items.

When I have taken an image of an item that I think I can use later, I usually convert it to a PNG format so that it can be easily placed into the composition. If you want to use your image for a competition remember that most require all components to be your own work, that includes every item you place into the finished image.

Textures are also extremely useful and are often required to give the image a look of unity. As textures are everywhere, they are easy to accumulate and have in your arsenal. By using blending modes and changing the hue and saturation in Photoshop you can give one texture many different looks.

Photoshop brushes can add many different looks to an image. For example, clouds, smoke, rain and splashes, just to name a few, can add some mystique. Again, by changing the blending mode, and hue and saturation, many different looks can be obtained.

It is easier to start with a background and build the image from the bottom up. You must understand blending modes, opacity, light direction and how shadows fall, as they are the keystone to blending items into the final image to make it believable. Colour blending is also very important as the image must have the same overall tones.

"Illumination in Red"

Member Profile: Kevin Keliher

One of the things I enjoy about photography is the way it stimulates my creative side. With in-camera effects and post-processing software modern photography affords us so many options to express ourselves, share our vision and tell our story. The end result has the potential to be something of incredible beauty.

I became interested in photography when I was a youngster, back in the sixties, watching my mother take family photos with a Kodak Instamatic with a flash cube on top. I recall the advertisement "Take four flash pictures without changing bulbs".

When visiting relatives in Ontario in the sixties I remember being very impressed when an uncle took some black and white, low-key portraits of me with his new Polaroid camera. In the seventies, I was living in Nova Scotia while attending university and have a memory of one weekend going for a walk on my own in the snow with a small Olympus point-and-shoot camera. I do not recall much about the camera but I definitely had a good time. I spent many hours looking over those 4x6 printed photos!

"Silent Pause"

One of my first photographic milestones was when a cousin gave me The Joy of Photography (1979, Eastman Kodak Co.) in the early 90s. This was my introduction to the range of creative possibilities one could achieve with a camera. Not long afterwards I purchased my first SLR camera, a Canon.

A second primary experience was joining VCC. I initially joined in 2012 but was not able to make most meetings because I was still working full-time! I purchased a Canon 6D around this time. Once retired, two years later, I was finally able to engage in the Club more fully. VCC members, field trips, courses and general kind encouragement were truly an inspiration. I found participating in the competitions challenging and very helpful.

A third central experience was attending a week-long training session at Santa Fe Photographic Workshops given by artist Maggie Taylor. It not only taught me a lot about Photoshop but also afforded me the chance to see how I managed with my "peers." It was quite a boost to my confidence. The degree to which Maggie is attentive to detail was impressive. Definitely a rewarding genre of photography based in dedication, hard work and long hours.

"Northern Pintail"

Regarding equipment I agree with Freeman Patterson who says creativity is not in our equipment. Having said that, I love using Canon's latest R series of cameras and RF lenses. The new animal eye detection has re-energized my interest in bird photography. It is a pleasure to use good quality and well-designed equipment.

Over the past few years, I have mostly entered creative and altered reality competitions. In reality I enjoy all kinds of photography and hope to once again try my hand at other genres. When I have received critical feedback on my images, I often have a "bad" reaction. However, after a bit of time, I calm down and realize the judge was correct. Hopefully, I can continue learning new skills.

In addition to entering more competitions my other aspirations in 2021 are to deepen my understanding of my own vision by creating several different "series" or "studies" that speak to me. I think if I take more care and time when doing a study of a particular subject I will relate/respond better to it. As local artist Jackie Saunders-Ritchie said "Re-visit your subject again and again. Really get to know it."

The best photographic advice that comes to mind at the moment is "When you photograph for yourself, you will tell your own story" - Freeman Patterson.

That Remote Feeling

by Roger Botting

This past year has been one of being separated from friends, of feeling remote, so, why not treat your camera that way? In the beginning, we all pressed the shutter release to make the camera click, then we felt that was inadequate and used a cable release or self-timer. The self-timer might work when needed, the cable release was never long enough or would break, or it just would not work properly.

When I got my first motor drive camera about 1980 I looked at the electrical port on the front and realized that there were more opportunities for taking photos. I bought the far too expensive plug for the port and started remote trigger use. I would use up to 10 metres of wire. Thirty-six captures of remoteness. One aside, my then three-year old daughter used the remote to shoot our Christmas card. It's that easy. I set up the shot, she took it! Time went on and newer cameras came into my life. A new type of plug, same camera manufacturer. And this would happen two more times.

I bought a cheap eBay Cactus brand radio remote trigger. Cheap, yes, but it worked nicely, and still does. The batteries cost more to replace than I paid for the remote if you buy them at The Source. I buy them at The Dollar Store for 25% of the price. Switching cameras and getting new photo thoughts in my head meant new devices. First was a Yongnuo wired remote. A cheap copy of the Canon brand remote it does single shot and allows me to do time-lapses. Dial in how many shots and how often. I still have that remote but it only works on certain cameras. One metre of freedom.

Then came the Pixel brand radio remote. It could perform all the functions of the Yongnuo remote plus it has 32 radio control channels. The camera attachment cord is interchangeable so I can use it on all my current cameras. I use it for longer exposures; no camera shake from me touching the camera. Now I had thirty metres of freedom.

But life goes on and there is always something to tempt me. Smart phones came out promising me more. Some of my newer cameras connect with my iPhone. The Sony Action Cam app connects nicely and allows it to work properly. Remote functions work nicely.

The Nikon remote software, SnapBridge, is not that good. The current version does work but I know that better software can be written however, it does allow me to download my photos to my smart phone. A similar app allows the transfer of photos from my Panasonic camera.

I now have the Tether Tools Case Air wireless tethering system and my daughter uses the CamRanger. They allow you to preview your shot, change camera settings, shoot remotely, and allow downloads to your smart device. One thing you can do is set your camera up and then adjust the focus using coloured contour lines around the in-focus parts, set exposure and take the photo. But, sorry, there is no zoom. It will also do focus stacking for macro shots. For those ground level shots there is no bending over until it's time to pack up. One nice feature, when it needs a firmware update, it connects and updates without any fuss. It is Wi-Fi connected and secure, for iPhone and Android.

We don't get a lot of lightning on the west coast but a lightning trigger can be nice. Several years ago, I bought an AEO Lightning Strike! 2. It worked well the first few times but when I was in the middle of a really nasty electrical storm it wouldn't work. I now know that there was a known hardware issue. There are newer models today and it is now much less expensive.

Timelapse+ is a device which is a bit smarter than most camera triggers. Originally designed to do a better job at time-lapse photography it can control several brands of camera when used with the correct cables. It does bulb ramping, which is continually controlling your exposure as lighting conditions change. It also allows you to use it as a broken-beam photo trigger when something blocks a light beam. It works well as a lightning trigger and will do focus stacking. The control screen is small and it will take a while to learn how to use but it does add a lot of functionality to many camera brands. I haven't used its replacement (Timelapse+ VIEW) yet but it does have a view screen to monitor how the bulb ramp exposure changes are doing. It is considered the gold standard for time-lapses. Elijah Parker, the creator, is quite responsive to user questions.

MIOPS is an interesting device. Again, a smart device, this one does basic time-lapse and lightning trigger but has a few other tricks too! It has a sound trigger for those balloon-burst photos, a broken light beam trigger, remote shutter release all in a rather small package that clips onto your camera. It also allows for control from the device and from your smart phone. The MIOPS company also have a couple of other devices that connect through the same app on your smart phone.

And what do I use most when I get that remote feeling? Usually the Pixel remote control. It sits in my camera bag next to the spare camera battery.

iPhone Photography

by Bobbie Carey

Our Club workshops, our new mobile photography SIG, and Club members are doing it. “Doing what?”, you ask. Why, using their phone to take pictures and entering them in competitions. A number of Club members have found that the light-weight phone is handy and capable of producing photos that compare favourably to those taken with a DSLR or mirrorless camera. Seriously though, why would you choose to do phone photography?

In this article I will outline some of the remarkable features of the iPhone 11 Pro. While some characteristics of this phone are unique to it there are others that are fairly similar to those of other brands. Specifically, I will describe the features that allow for the phone to compete fairly well with the traditional camera and follow up with a look at what the smart phones lack.

In addition to its primary camera the 11 Pro has a three-lens system on the back of the phone: the f2.4 ultra-wide lens can cover a 120-degree field of view, the f2 telephoto lens with a 4X optical zoom, and the f1.8 wide-angle lens. This phone camera should perform well in low light conditions.

The wide lens provides a moderately wide angle of view suitable for many different shooting scenarios and is probably the lens I use most often. The ultra-wide lens allows zooming out to capture a much greater field

“Blue Poppy”

“Clouds Over the Gorge”

of view and is perfect for great landscape and cloud formation shots. The telephoto lens lets me zoom in for a closer view of the subject. I also have the option to dial in the focal length I want.

There are various camera modes built into the iPhone. Swipe on the camera screen to move from one mode to another. As well as the Photo mode there is also Night, Pano, Burst and Portrait mode which includes five different lighting “set-ups”: studio, contour, stage, stage light mono and high-key light mono. Night mode is a handy feature that comes on automatically when shooting in low light. The output is quite amazing producing crisp, clear photos even when lighting conditions are poor.

With a camera, panoramic pictures can be created by taking several photos of the scene from a single viewpoint then stitching these images together to create a much larger single image. With the Pano mode there is no need to manually stitch the photos together. You simply point the iPhone at the starting position of the panoramic photo and press the shutter button to start shooting. Pan the iPhone towards the end position.

With Burst mode I can take up to ten photos per second for as long as I hold down the shutter button. I can capture the perfect action shot of children, animals, birds, and water splashes. It’s also just right to capture that magical moment in street photography, getting the perfect pose or stride of a pedestrian.

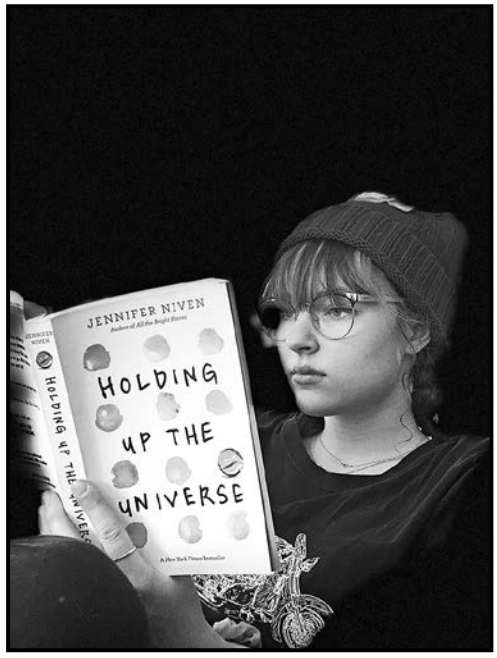
I love the Portrait mode; there is so much creativity possible. I can use this mode to shoot pretty stunning portraits of people and pets as well as being able to blur the background behind any foreground object. I can achieve a shallow depth of field with a DSLR, but with a phone? Portrait mode makes it possible to recreate this effect. One of the best features is that I can add studio

lighting to the photo after I've taken it or, I can choose the lighting I want before I press the shutter button.

There is no separate macro mode but the wide-angle lens produces an unbelievably sharp image with lots of detail. This is the most amazing discovery I've made and probably the mode I've used most frequently, particularly when shooting flowers. I've spent many hours at Butchart Gardens and the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific (HCP) gardens, entranced by wee flower stamens and on beaches, excited by grains of sand! There is also a flash that can be useful for lighting flowers in the shade. It's not very powerful so its use is limited. These functions are all available on a DSLR or mirrorless camera but how much simpler they are on the phone!

There is no need to carry around a heavy, $5,000 telephoto lens to capture that owl or lioness cub in the far distance. Or is there? Well, here is the most important weakness of phone photography. Even if you add on an additional telephoto lens (and there are wee, tiny lenses available), you will find a very, very small improvement over the existing 4X lens. Moment, an online company, sells a 58 mm lens that can achieve a 2X optical zoom.

Aside from that weakness, admittedly an important one, most iPhone photographers would tend to admit to be



"Hannah"

fairly satisfied with their phone camera's performance at every other level. There are some who might even venture to say that the iPhone functions as a fantastic camera. (Not discussed are three other interesting functions, long exposure photography, HDR, and intentional camera movement (ICM)).

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Perfect Timing: A Stormtrooper Selfie

by Daniel Rondeau

During my home-bound summer I came across Mitchel Wu *(instagram.com/mitchelwuphotography/?hl=en*), a professional toy photographer who sometime reveals his techniques. I was inspired so I set out to create the story of a stormtrooper taking a selfie while a roadside explosive device goes off. The only toys left in my house were Lego. Wu does not use them, probably because it takes too long to build anything! I recommend finding a former child for this task but mine would not help!

The "set" was built outside in partial shade. It is a pile of dirt and rocks arranged on plywood. The background is a piece of wood lying at an angle and covered with yellow and green vegetation. The front of the vehicle is held above the dirt by a black stick of Lego (later cloned out). The roadside explosion was created by blowing the dirt with a compressed air canister (as used to dust off computers). These canisters also produce a white cloud of "smoke" when discharged.

Obtaining a realistic and well-exposed explosion was the greatest challenge. It required experimenting with the position of the light sources (a fixed light and a flash on a tripod), setting off very many "bombs", and trying different camera settings. The final image was taken with my Nikon D850 and a Tamron 28-70 mm f2.8 G2 lens at 70 mm, f5, 1/25th second, and ISO 64.

Key steps in post-production were removing the vehicle support, using a smudge brush to create movement of the front wheels, and bringing out the explosion area by increasing brightness and contrast. All fun and play! This image placed 1st in the September 2020 Theme competition "Play".

Moonlit Nights at Fisgard Lighthouse

by Mary-Lee Sampson

Warm summer nights are wonderful for star gazing at Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Site when they have their star parties. This happens a few times per year, hopefully it may return this year as Covid cancelled it last summer.

During the star party in 2019 I captured this image of the Lighthouse during the Victoria Camera Club field trip there. Since the stars failed to show up for the party and no Milky Way was around for miles, I decided I needed to kick it up a notch and add some surreal images to make it my own.

I had a previous moon shot, not quite full unfortunately, but I managed to liquefy it a bit to make it work. Perfect, no, it's altered reality and it's all I had.

I transformed the moon in Photoshop to make it extremely large and thought, what next? I knew it had to be birds and I tried several different ones including eagles, seagulls, and pelicans, but I found the herons from the Beacon Hill Park Rookery worked best. Again, I used the transform tool in Photoshop to manually cut them out and place them in the image.

My skills in that area are still poor, but with time and determination, using 200% or more enlargement to see to erase what I didn't need, I managed to get it to a camera-club-worthy rendition of the moon on steroids over Fisgard Lighthouse.

Technically the lighthouse was shot with my mirrorless Fuji XT2 and its 18-55 mm kit lens at ISO 400, 18 mm, f16 and a 20 second exposure. I'm looking forward to returning to these summer night parties and hopefully the stars show up next time! This image placed 1st in the September 2019 Altered Reality competition.

Photography in Old Town, Victoria

by Steve Barber

Look Up! That is the secret to finding creative images in Old Town, Victoria. Old Town is one of the largest heritage conservation areas in British Columbia and a place of local, provincial and national significance. The commercial buildings dating from the late nineteenth century in the downtown historic core embody Victoria's transformation from a gold rush boom town to a permanent port and centre of trade. The varied architectural features provide numerous opportunities for photographic expression: rich facades embellished with decorative cornices, brick arches, playful roof lines, and a wide variety of colours, textures and forms.

"Detail, Board of Trade Building, Bastion Square"

A good telephoto zoom lens such as a 70-200 mm can isolate and capture the details in stone, brick and terra cotta. Even 300 mm and 400 mm can be successful in certain areas. Since many of the buildings are only two or three storeys, you can capture the details from ground level. You can also find a few high vantage points to minimize the inevitable vertical distortion which can occur when shooting upwards. For example, the roof level of the public parkades such as the one on Yates Street allow excellent views of the upper facades of Lower Yates Street. The stairway in Market Square off the main entrance on Johnson Street also allows clear views of the colourful painted facades on Lower Johnson Street.

Light quality is often key in making the details "pop". In the early mornings and late evenings in June, raking light illuminates the north facades of many of the blocks in Old Town. That time of year also provides opportunities to include Victoria's colourful flower baskets in the images.

Look for rhythms of window openings and columns by shooting at a sharp angle down the street with your telephoto. The curves of brick arches in many facades can be exploited in composition. The textures of stone, brick, rusted metal, and terra cotta are everywhere. The painted facades offer a rich tapestry of colour.

One specific area with rich photographic possibilities is Chinatown, with narrow alleys full of contrasts of light and shadow such as Fan Tan and Dragon Alleys. Look for the traditional colours of red and green on doorways and storefronts, with black Chinese symbols conveying the character and mystery of the district. On Fisgard and Government Streets you will discover ornate curving roof lines, cast iron balconies and Chinese lanterns. And the opulent decorations on the Gate of Harmonious Interest provide numerous prospects for abstract compositions.

The buildings fronting on Bastion Square provide another area with interesting photographic opportunities. Here you will find the former 1889 Court House with its arched windows, curved corner turret, and strong horizontal lines in belt courses and cornices. Again, shoot upwards to discover interesting combinations of curved lines and colours. The 1888 Burnes House at 16 Bastion Square features an elaborate cornice, arched window hoods and beautifully crafted bay windows. The antique glass remaining in some of the windows results in intriguing reflections of the façade of the courthouse. The main arched entrance to the 1892 Board of Trade building at 31 Bastion Square displays some superbly crafted stone embellishments at ground level which are wonderfully highlighted by the golden afternoon sunlight in mid-summer. So, grab your telephoto lenses, start your explorations, and remember "Look Up!"

"Burnes House, Bastion Square"

Beach Photography

by Neil Boyle

West coast photographers have a huge advantage compared to most Canadians. We live near one of the most diverse and photogenic environments, beaches. Here on Vancouver Island there are many to choose from. If you want images that most haven't seen, find the less common and less populated beaches (insider tip: read Theo Dombrowski's Secret Beaches series and Google works for beaches further afield).

"Nancie on Bethels Beach, New Zealand"

With so much coastal space it's easy to expand photography to include seascapes and coastline but, for this article, I'll stick to beaches. There are three main types, sand, gravel and pebble, and they are often surrounded by beautiful wave-worn rock formations. These features can be the subject of the image, or part of a composition: the fore, middle, or background. The environment plays a role and can make the image, e.g., sunrises and sunsets, mist/fog, winds, and storms. Almost all weather works, even high noon can be good for high contrast B&W images.

The photographically deadly-totally-grey-sky can be a giant soft box for detail and macro shots (just shoot below the horizon). The golden and blue hours change the colours and mood of any image for the better. And a beach at high tide is a totally different environment from low tide; the waves are very different if the tide is rising or falling.

Aside from camera bodies, lenses, and a tripod, gear for beach photography is almost minimalistic: lens hood to control flare, a polarizing filter for highlights and changing the water colour and transparency, neutral density (ND) filters for long exposure (LE) shots, fill flash if shooting people in bright sunlight, and a shade device for faces and details.

There are few genres of photography that can't be improved by shooting them on a beach. People, fashion, portrait, wedding, fine art, they all look better with a background of sand and water. A lot of these genres can be shot with the subject knee deep in water. Unpopulated beaches are good for landscape and wildlife, and animal shots can include birds, the occasional mammal and all the animals with shells. With some planning and extra gear, the animals and plants that live below the water become subjects. Smaller animals abound, making interesting macro/micro shots. Shooting small, capturing just the details, rather than the bigger picture, only needs a dedicated eye to find a myriad of possibilities.

Most movement on a beach can be rendered still with a shutter speed of little more than 1/125th second, while longer exposures produce the feeling of movement in people and water. The addition of ND filters makes moving water interesting in different ways, depending on the length of the exposure. At first you wouldn't expect the architecture genre to be available on a beach, until you notice what can be done with piers, boat houses, boats, lighthouses, and the beach-log structures built just above the high tide mark. On that note, standing at the water and shooting along the beach, or over the sand to elements above the high tide mark opens more possibilities. The contrast between dark rocks and bright surf works with both B&W and LE. With enough moonlight, night photography produces interesting results and, if there is water movement, the LE effect adds to it. Some beaches have specialty elements, such as the waterfall at Sandcut Beach, the tide pools at Botanical Beach, the glacial erratic in Gonzales Bay, the boats and islands seen from Cadboro Bay beach, and Fisgard Lighthouse. In Victoria, the Olympic Mountains or Mount Baker offer iconic backgrounds and strategic placement of the camera can enhance the magnificence of these beauties.

For absolutely the best bird shots, you can find multiple subjects almost anywhere around Esquimalt Lagoon.

"Gonzales Bay, Victoria"

Every beach has its population of birds willing to pose. Some beaches have sand dunes, another subject unto itself, one with colours and shadows that shine in the golden hour. Best without footprints, so come after rain or wind clears it and leaves photogenic patterns. The plants that grow in and anchor dunes often have interesting leaf patterns and flowers.

Beaches are good places to capture certain elements. Surf by itself or with surfers is a broad enough subject that there are photographers who specialize in this. Beaches abound with people and their devices as subjects or backgrounds: surf-boards, kite-boards, wind surfers, stand up paddle-boards, kayaks, sailboats and their events (i.e., Swiftsure International Yacht Race, regattas, local races), working vessels (pilot boats, log booms, ships), fishing people, vessels and gear.

"Ruby, Light Painting on Gonzales Beach"

Silhouettes, especially in the golden hour, have a spectacular background if the clouds cooperate. Fill flash may play a role in portraits here. Some activities work really well on open sand at night such as steel wool burning or LE light painting with coloured lights. Give kids light sticks or put a small light on dogs and let them run about. Adding flash to this can make an interesting portrait of the person with the light. Consider putting waterproof lights on kayak paddles.

All the usual rules (read suggestions) of composition still apply. So, landscapes must have foregrounds (that lovely sunset is only a backdrop) and every image needs a point of interest. Simple is better. Zen artists favour an odd number of elements, three or five, and remove everything from the image that isn't a necessary part of it. Plan your shot to place the point of interest somewhere in a recognized place (rule of thirds, golden triangle, etc.), or break the rules for a good reason. Remember to level your horizon (because it is really, really obvious in a beach image) and think about why you've chosen to place it where you did. For unusual horizon positions, consider positive and negative space. Keep an eye out for leading lines, patterns, diagonals, C and S curves, shapes and other composition elements that someone has decided are important and an eye for unwanted elements, something poking into the image from the side or top or growing out of a head. Consider the height you shoot from; eye level is the most boring. Very low (as low as within touching distance of the sand or water is really good for reflections) or very high (from a vantage point, maximizes the amount of water in the view) gives an unusual view. For another view, go out into the water and shoot towards the shore or along waves (look for the curl).

"Ross Bay, Victoria, Night Mist"

Watch out for the hazards. Cameras do not like salt water in any form and a dunking is usually the end of its life. Sand doesn't help either. Beaches can be bright and exposure bracketing is your friend. If you want to avoid crowds, come early, come late, come when the weather's unpleasant. Early, or very early, is better for sand without footprints, but for that, the best time is when a falling tide has swept the sand clean.

Other advantages of this time are the patterns in the sand (sand waves), left behind sea creatures and the reflections wet sand offers.

There are two approaches I take to making a beach image. Sometimes I decide on the image I want to produce, check the tide tables and the weather, figure out where the sun or moon needs to be, and choose several possible locations in my mind. At the site I walk about, lining things up, choosing elements and placing them, set up the gear, make the image, refine it, make it again. Sometimes that works.

I always carry a camera when I walk and, on beaches, sometimes I come across shots, ideas for shots, an element that might work in an image, and there may go the next hour. Some of my best images come from the happenstance of the second method.

Beginner's Corner: Portraits

by Joseph Finkleman

Portraiture is a complex subject. There are environmental, candid, industrial, or theatrical portraits, and the most common, a pleasing likeness. A pleasing likeness is difficult for two reasons: posing and lighting.

The main challenge of posing is that the human face is asymmetrical. One side of the face is narrower than the other. Turn the narrow side slightly away from the camera while remembering to leave just a little bit of the skin on the far side of the eye visible. Otherwise, one gets a gaping eye socket.

Ensure that the center of the lens is never higher or lower than the tip of the nose. For a head and shoulders set-up, use a lens that allows you to be no closer than two metres nor further away than four metres from the subject.

On a full-frame camera use a lens that is 85-135 mm, on an APS that is 56-90 mm, on a micro-four-thirds that is 42-67 mm. For a full-figure portrait use a normal lens (around 50 mm full frame) or a very moderate wide angle.

There is a lot of ridiculous information circulating concerning f-numbers for portraiture. The goal is to focus specifically on the eyes, but you do not want the tip of the nose to go wildly out of focus and appear blobby.

All of this is dependent on the focal length of the lens. For a full frame camera use f4-f8, for an APS use f2.8-f4, and on a micro-four-thirds use as wide open as you can get but no more than f2. Ultra-wide-angle lens portrait shots suffer from blobby noses and look odd.

A proper bokeh is achieved by having the background as far away from the subject as is possible. This is at least two metres, preferably much more.

Think of the face as if it were a vertical clock. Keep the light source somewhere between one and three if on the right side of the face, eleven to nine on the left side. Keep the light source on the side of the face that is turned slightly away from the camera. This is called short lighting. There are two very important things to look for in a proper lighting solution. One is the catch-light in the eye closest to the light. The other is the nose shadow.

In subsequent articles we will be looking at very specific lighting techniques. Today we will consider the simplest lighting technique: the loop light. The light will be positioned at a height that makes a two or ten o'clock catch-light in the eye.

"Philip"

Now I want you to envision a different clock face, not one that is vertical, as we have just discussed, but rather a horizontal clock hovering above the subject's head. The six point is closest to the camera and the twelve is furthest away.

While in terms of height, the loop light is at the two or ten o'clock position on the vertical clock face, as we have just said. Simultaneously, on the horizontal clock face the light must be placed at the four to five or seven to eight position. This will preclude the nose shadow elongating so as to intersect the mouth.

I use a three-light solution, but a two or even four-light solution is also good. A simple two-light solution involves using the main light, which is everything we have discussed so far, and then a fill light. The fill light "fills-in" the shadows caused by the main light. A fill light should be half the intensity of the main light and can be placed at a greater distance from the subject than the main light. However, the fill light must be as close as possible to the camera without casting a shadow and its height must be no greater than the camera position itself.

I used a home solution for this article. A floor stand reading light and a piece of tag board for the fill light. In subsequent articles I will use studio lights to show other lighting techniques.

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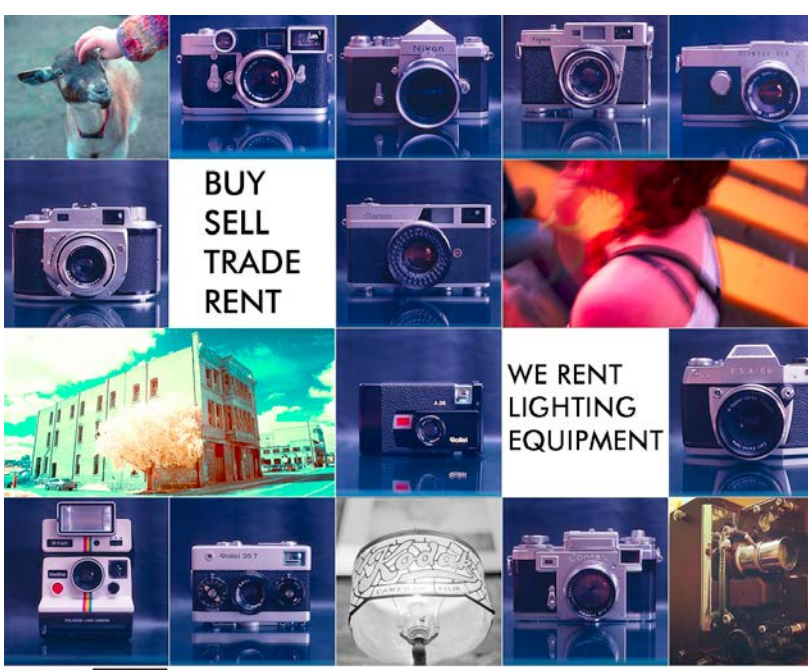

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