



Close-Up

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"Northern Harrier" by Steve Smith



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Victoria Camera Club

Close-Up is the magazine of the Victoria Camera Club,
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 Editor, Richard James, e-mail to editor@victoriacameraclub.ca
 for submissions or to advertise in *Close-Up*.



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

Events

We hold a number of events including:

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

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

Membership

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

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

For additional information: please contact:

Membership: membership@victoriacameraclub.ca
Workshops: workshops@victoriacameraclub.ca
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The Victoria Camera Club is a member club of the Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria (CACGV), Canadian Association for Photographic Arts (CAPA), and the Photographic Society of America (PSA).



Calendar

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

January 5th 2017: Competition Night

The November competition results will be presented. The theme for January is "Foul Weather." The deadline for submission is January 5th.

January 12th 2017: Presentation Night

Professional photographer Chris Harris introduces us to the wilderness area of the Cariboo-Chilcotin plateau that stretches from Tweedsmuir Park to the Fraser River. He will show us the variety of biogeoclimatic zones of BC's central interior through his stories and images.

January 19th 2017: Members Night

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

Workshop and Field Trip Highlights

Basic Photography and Basic Photoshop workshops.

Nicholson Manufacturing and Butterfly Gardens field trips.

Cover image: "Northern Harrier" by Steve Smith. It was a grey Delta day with a few hesitant thrusts of sunlight through the overhead clouds. Flat light for most of the day but with random opportunities for decent shots.

About an hour before sunset our field trip arrived at the dike near Boundary Bay airport to look for Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls. Then the Western clouds parted and the dear old sun lined itself up with the opening to spread beautiful golden light over the salt marsh. Finally a male Northern Harrier decided to inspect a group of eight photographers and landed on a stump in the marsh about 50 metres from the dike. The viewing angle between subject and sun was great and the bird moved his head about as he gazed at the excited humans.

I took many shots but I liked this one best because it captures the predatory gaze of the bird. Canon 70D, Tamron 150-600 mm lens at 600 mm, f11, 1/250 second, ISO 1600.

President's Message

A New Year lies ahead. Time for new ventures, new ideas, new arrows in our quiver. But, wait. What of our traditions? Valued programs? The tried and true? When applied to the Victoria Camera Club, a balance must be struck. While moving forward in stimulating ways, we must not forget how we got here and what we value. I have been drawn to this line of thought through two examples from the closing months of our recent fall session.

In November, I finally got the opportunity, at a busy Members' Night, to present the results of our Summer Scavenger Hunt. A scavenger hunt in this format was, in itself, something new to our program. Participating was good fun for a number of our members and the presentation of results was well received by the members and others present. What was more cutting edge for me, though, was the ability to post the resulting video to our newly established YouTube channel. Even so, it was only the second show to go up, the first being "Troll Country Adventure" by Margarita Huang and James Kissinger. This development brings a significant new opportunity forward, to share our Members' Night presentations with Club members who could not attend as well as with the world of potential viewers beyond.

My second example pertains to the subject of traditions. For want of a coordinator, I had been willing to forgo holding our Christmas Pot Luck Social. Bad move! It soon became apparent that the tradition which surrounds this event was beating strongly just beneath the surface. A number of members came forward, voicing their concerns and suggestions regarding possible ways to proceed. Nadine Soan, a new member not versed in the traditions of the Club, came forward with valuable organizational skills. A show of hands at a meeting indicated the desire to carry on. As I pen these words, a healthy contingent of members has registered and a growing list of delectable offerings has been identified. Clearly, the value of our traditions ought to be carefully weighed before changes are entertained. A second lesson is that, when in doubt, ask the members.

With the above lessons in mind, I look forward with optimism as our Club steps forward to engage with the events that will be ours to undertake and enjoy in 2017. While embracing the new we will be mindful of what we continue to value from the past. Happy New Year to each of you as your hopes and wishes, both personal and for the VCC, unfold in the days and months ahead!

Garry Schaefer, President.

by Daniel Brimacombe

I never thought that photography would become a passion of mine but when I moved to Tobago, the smaller island of Trinidad and Tobago, I started to be interested in it. A few close friends from Canada came to visit me for my birthday, and gave me two waterproof cameras to document the wildlife I would see when snorkeling in the coral reefs. Fast-forward a few years, I became an assistant caretaker and photographer for a therapeutic riding stables where locals and tourists could ride and swim with horses. One day, while grooming one of my brown-eyed equine friends at the cliff-side, I noticed that its eyes were like mirrors and cast very clear reflections.

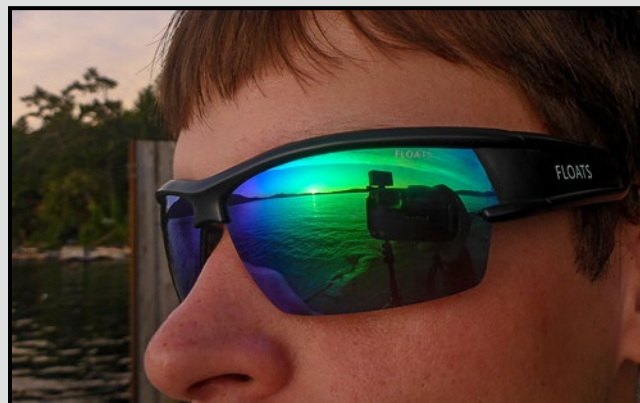
Since a horse eye has very little sclera (the surrounding white part of the eye), it has a huge iris (the coloured, textured part of the eye) to make up for it, and a horizontal oval-shaped pupil (the darkest and clearest part of the eye) in the centre. A horse also has near 360-degree vision, thanks to their eyes protruding from the sides of their head, but they have a blind-spot directly in front of them, as well as behind. With these factors combined, and a lot of patience, persistence, cooperation, positioning, and luck; unique, wide-angle photographs can be achieved with a look similar to that of a fish-eye lens.



For this scenario I lined up the sun, setting into the ocean from the cliff-side, surrounded by a frame of trees. The camera I was using at the time was an Olympus TG-820 with a 12 megapixel 1/2.3" sensor and a 28-140 mm optical zoom lens. I used the widest angle possible with auto-focus set to macro, since I had to hold the horse in position with one hand, and didn't have manual focus available at the time.

It is important to know that looking directly at the sun for more than a couple of seconds without proper protec-

tion is dangerous and painful! It took me many attempts before I finally got the horse-eye photo. I didn't force my subject to keep looking at the sun, I only coaxed it to look at me when it wanted to. If you want to try this, there is an easier and safer alternative: sunglasses!



Depending on their shape sunglasses can give a similar wide-angle effect while shielding your eyes. You should use 100% UV protective-lens sunglasses or certified eclipse-viewing glasses. If you have a camera with an articulated or flip-up screen, you shouldn't have too much trouble on your own but a better way of doing this is to have a model. Have someone pose for you with their eyes closed wearing the preferred glasses, then take the photo with relative ease yourself. Or, set the glasses down on a surface with a dark background behind the lens, and have the arms open to avoid their being seen through the glass. You can then get great shots quickly and efficiently! In the photo above, I had neither of these so I took many blind selfies and moved inch by inch in different directions!

To get the best sharpness you will need to use manual focus because you won't be looking at the surface of the glasses but beyond. Like looking into a mirror, everything still has depth to it, so you will have to focus on your main target. A tripod is recommended since the slightest shift can change the focus of an object within the reflection. If you have a good zoom lens available, the further away the camera, the smaller its reflection gets, so it's not taking up so much space in the shot. Play around with the aperture, as well, since higher f-stops will help keep most things sharp and lower f-stops will blur foregrounds and backgrounds but increase focus sensitivity.

I haven't seen many people authentically achieve these kinds of photos so I hope this article inspires you to try out something unique! Be safe, and enjoy seeing the world from a different perspective!

by Gordon Griffiths

Last August, fellow VCC member, John Lockyer, and I took a one-day cruise in Nootka Sound to explore the photo opportunities in this scenic part of the west coast of Vancouver Island. The Uchuck III is a converted World War II minesweeper based in Gold River. "Uchuck" is the Nootkan word for "Healing Waters." It is 41 m long with a 7 m beam and a double-planked 8 cm fir hull. It can carry up to 100 passengers and 70 tonnes of freight.

It has operated here since 1960 and provides a year-round service carrying cargo and passengers to logging camps, fish farms, isolated resorts and communities in Nootka and Kyuquot Sounds. It also carries campers and launches kayaks and other smaller craft.

Cruise Descriptions: In the summer, two day trips are made each week from Gold River to Friendly Cove (Yuquot). Freight is delivered to camps and commercial operations. The ship drops its passengers at Friendly Cove for about 90 minutes before returning to Gold River.

Friendly Cove is scenic and provides some interesting photographic opportunities: beaches, tidal pools, the Nootka Lighthouse, and a former Spanish Church, built before Captains Vancouver and Cook visited Vancouver Island, now used as a First Nations cultural centre.

A two-day trip is made weekly to Nootka Sound and Esperanza Inlet. The Uchuck then traverses the open Pacific to Kyuquot Sound where it overnights. The following day, it returns to Gold River.

Twice in June and September, a three-day cruise goes through Nootka Sound to Kyuquot Sound and then on to Tahsis. The first night is spent at Kyuquot, the second at



"Unloading"

Tahsis. The return trip is via Tahsis Inlet to Friendly Cove and then on to Gold River. The unique parts of this trip are the overnight stops at remote locations. Also, the ship will stop if it encounters pods of whales, rafts of sea otters or other interesting sights.



"Sea Otter"

The last option, which we chose, is a one-day cruise around Nootka Sound delivering passengers and freight to various locations, including Friendly Cove. There is no opportunity to spend time ashore on this trip.

Logistics: The cruises start at 9 am from the government wharf about 18 kilometers west of Gold River, with check-in at least 30 minutes before departure. It takes about five hours to drive from Victoria to Gold River and the highway from Campbell River to Gold River (the only land access) is narrow with many hills and curves. There are limited opportunities to pass other vehicles.

Gold River has two motels, some B&B's, and a nearby campground. There are several choices for breakfast and lunch, but the only two that serve dinner are the local pub and the golf course. There are no fast food restaurants but we did find a takeout deli with extended hours where we obtained dinner one night.

The Uchuck serves fresh baked muffins, sandwiches, candy, tea, coffee and other beverages however, passengers are welcome to bring their own food.

The cruises generally return to Gold River between 5 and 6 pm. After collecting our gear and driving back to Gold River, we arrived at our motel about 7 pm.

Photographic Opportunities: It rained on five separate occasions on this trip but the weather did not prevent us from shooting. We were dressed for the weather and found a spot to stand on deck out of the rain during lighter showers. During heavy showers we could stand on

a lower deck under cover and still photograph but the space was small and crowded.

There were about 40 passengers on our trip. Ten of us had DSLRs and multiple lenses. There are open areas around the decks where one can stand to photograph without interfering with other people. If the ship was at full capacity with 100 passengers it would be difficult to photograph without interfering with someone's view.

Despite the weather, there were many photographic opportunities on our trip including;

Wilderness Scenery: The natural landscape is magnificent and provides a continually changing panorama of wide vistas, coves, rocky shoreline, islands and islets, changing skies and sea colour.



"Nootka Sunset"

Kayakers and Campers: We stopped at a remote island where three kayakers were launched in their kayaks by a unique crane apparatus. They provided colourful subjects to demonstrate scale in the wider landscape.

Private Resorts: This cruise delivered food, fuel and other supplies to a remote fishing lodge on Nootka Island located in a beautiful cove accessible only by air and water. At each location it was interesting to watch and photograph the efficiency and skill with which the crew handled the cranes and material.

Logging Operations: We passed a selective logging operation on a remote mountainside where individual trees were being cut and removed by a large helicopter and dropped into a log boom tended by two tugs. We also stopped at a log sort and booming operation. While the freight was being unloaded, we watched as huge logs were sorted into bundles, tied with wire and rolled down a ramp into the ocean with a resulting, tremendous explosion of water.



"Helicopter Logging"

Wildlife: We saw sea otters three times and were able to photograph one feeding on crabs. We observed, but could not photograph, a group of black bears on a sandy beach. We saw and were able to photograph a surf scoter, eagles and other wildlife. We did not see any whales, but they are seen regularly on these trips. On the longer cruises the ship will stop to allow better wildlife photographic opportunities.

Street Photography: There was an interesting and diverse group of people on the cruise who, with the crew, presented some "street photography" opportunities. I had an opportunity to chat with, and photograph, an interesting First Nations person. We took photographs of other passengers with our and their own cameras..

Equipment: I used two cameras and several lenses on this trip. The main camera was my DSLR, but I had a very small, high quality pocket camera that I used for photographing people. I used my 70-200 mm lens more than any other lens, but at different times used my 24-70 mm and 16-35 mm lenses for landscapes. My 400 mm lens was most useful for wildlife shots. I would recommend not taking a tripod. There are too many people on board to be able to properly set up and use a tripod. We found a safe, dry spot under a staircase to store our camera bags while shooting.

I would highly recommend taking a Uchuck cruise to experience and photograph this marvellous part of Vancouver Island's west coast.



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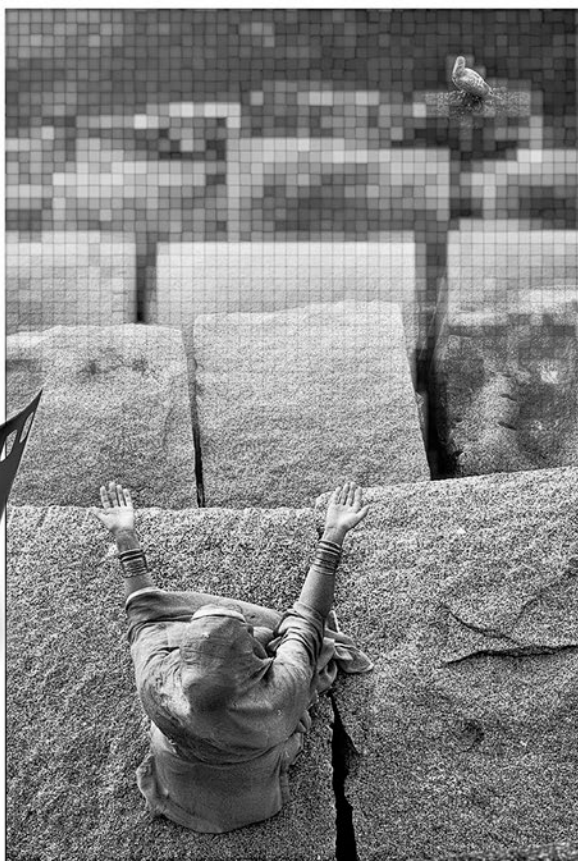
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Bridging Photo Technologies

by Giuseppe Buccoliero

In the last 10-15 years DSLR cameras have evolved,. Amongst other things they are now able to shoot video, as well as still images. At some point in their life some photographers may like to try the video capability in their DSLR camera. After all there is a very close technical and artistic relationship between a still picture and video, as video is simply multiple still images shot in sequence.

The great thing about a DSLR camera for video is the film-like quality with a shallow depth of field obtained with a wide-aperture lens, at a much lower price than expensive professional camcorders. The price of a Canon 5D Mark II body with a 50 mm f1.8 prime lens is about \$2,500. This will do an excellent job compared to a medium-quality video camera like the Red, with a lavish cost of around \$25,000.

There is also the convenience of shooting excellent stills on a DSLR camera that is not available in most high priced camcorders. Another advantage for choosing a DSLR camera is the relatively lightweight and small size compared to a video camera.

A quite important aspect of a DSLR camera is the ability to swap different lenses vs. a fixed single lens with most camcorders. The slow fixed lens and small sensor in most camcorders produces a deep depth of field so most of the elements in a scene are all in focus, (vs. shallow DOF on a DSLR with a wide-aperture lens).

The frame rate in this type camera ranges from the standard 24 fps (frames per second), 30 fps, to 60 fps. This is quite adequate for amateur video work. Higher frame rates like the 300 fps used for sport broadcasts, and up to 960 fps are only possible on professional video cameras.

Although the video quality with a DSLR is awesome, there are a few negative sides in using a camera designed for still images. The audio capability is very basic and there are no volume controls or high quality audio input. The built-in microphone (mic) is usually low quality. This can be improved by attaching a better external mic with a cable to the camera mic input. However, this quick fix still has some limitations: noises when touching the camera body, and button noise that can easily be picked up by the mic. One good, but expensive, solution to this issue is to purchase a separate audio recorder to capture the audio.

A real disadvantage of shooting with this type of camera is the lack of a camcorder type handle on top of the

camera. Awkward button locations and the horizontal design of the camera body make it more difficult to follow a moving subject unless a pan-tilt tripod head or hand-held stabilizing rigging is used.

A DSLR camera gives excellent video quality for the price and if you are also a still shooter, you have two major features in the same body. If, however, you want to make professional level video, you might not be satisfied with a DSLR. You have to decide for yourself if it's worth investing in an expensive video camera.

Now for some shooting techniques. If you've been shooting hand-held stills with your DSLR you will discover that for video you need to use a tripod to avoid your video looking shaky and unprofessional.

Some newer DSLRs may be able to track focus on a moving subject, but it is not always reliable. If your subject is sufficiently stationary, start with the scene composition and then magnify the subject using Live-View to focus manually. Once everything looks sharp, go back to standard view and you're ready to shoot.

For subjects moving parallel to the camera, this might be sufficient as you follow your subject. For subjects moving toward or away from the camera, you need to refocus by rotating the focus ring to refocus as the distance changes, a technique known as "focus pulling."

DSLRs may overheat with continuous shooting and shut-off automatically to prevent damage to the electronics. Shooting in short sequences avoids this and may make for more interesting results than long, continuous shots.

For variety, a good ratio to shoot is 50% close-ups, 25% medium, and 25% wide shots. Instead of using the zoom to get those shots, it is better to move the camera. I would recommend making the clip length a minimum of 10 seconds, but not more than a few minutes.

What about settings for exposure, white balance and shutter speed? For video, the shutter speed is usually set at twice the frame rate: for 24 fps use 1/50 sec. For 30 fps use 1/60 sec. etc. If more or less light is needed, then change the ISO, or aperture, or use ND filters. Shutter speed usually stays constant unless some blur or other special effects are required. White balance must be manually set before shooting and adjusted every time the scene lighting colour changes.

I wonder if Ansel Adams would have tried some video shooting if his cameras would have allowed it.

by Pam Irvine

Disappearing Technology

The March theme, Disappearing Technology, is open for interpretation. You could photograph something like old farm equipment or shoot technology that has disappeared in the last few decades such as floppy discs, rotary telephones, typewriters, tape cassettes and public pay phones. Even within the photographic arena, items such as film, CRT TVs and monitors are disappearing (not that we will miss CRT monitors). At a social level things like hand written-letters are becoming rarer. Look around your home and put your imagination to work.

Whatever you choose, take some time to plan and create a great image. The purpose of this theme is not just to take a snapshot of an old piece of equipment, but rather to find the beauty in an old object or tell the history/story of the item. A really good image should evoke a mood or an emotion in the viewer. This category lends itself to indoor still-life photography, the perfect activity for a rainy weekend. Dig out some old family heirlooms (maybe some old toys) and spend a pleasant afternoon exploring and playing with light. Don't be afraid to get in close. Take this opportunity to push yourself outside your normal photographic box and use techniques that you have not tried before.

If the weather is nice (of even if it is not) this is a chance to photograph abandoned relics of the past, barns, sheds, tractors and plows. Art in the rough! Note that if you are photographing old barns, please respect private property and don't trespass.

Victoria has lots of locations open to the public to shoot vintage items:

- Heritage Acres: Beside the Pat Bay highway on Lochside Drive off of Island View Road. Winter hours are 9:30 am to noon daily, October to May, admission fee
- Craigdarroch Castle: Open 10 am to 4:30 pm, admission fee
- Fort Rodd Hill and Fisguard Lighthouse: Open 10 am to 4:30 pm admission is free on weekdays
- Royal BC Museum: Open 10 am to 5 pm daily, admission fee

For retro kitchen or home items, try places like second-hand stores (Value Village, Salvation Army), your mother's kitchen or your dad's workshop. Most importantly, have fun!

Do Camera Clubs and Competitions Inhibit Artistic Expression?

There is a large school of thought that believes photographic competitions cramp a photographer's style and hinders the individual's creative development.

One problem with competition in art is that there is no agreed objective standard to which competitors must aspire to or exceed. The standard for judging winners is always subjective. In an attempt to level the playing field, our Club gives the judges a recommended scoring system to use but how it is interpreted is still subjective.

Another downside is that while some may thrive and grow with it, competition can kill curiosity and experimentation if the only reason you create photographs is to compete. It is great if you're the winner, but winning every competition can lead to complacency. It might inspire some who lose to work harder, but it can discourage or demoralize others. Or it might encourage them to conform for the sake of winning; they look at winning entries and try to copy them and thereby extinguish their own flame of uniqueness.

Competitions offer structure or an excuse to shoot images, especially in the theme category. It's the comps deadline that I find useful. If you are like me, it is easy to set aside a shooting session or put off trying something new and different. The critique (sometimes taken with a large pinch of salt) is far more valuable than the actual marks given. My technical photography skills and observational eye have been improved by joining the Club and actively participating in all the activities the Club has to offer. Competitions make me think about my images more. I now often spot flaws in an image that before would never have even occurred to me.

I can either create images to make the judges happy, or I can create images that make me happy, so I shoot what I like and enter the competition to see if my opinion of my image is reasonable. I have never won first place and that is just fine.

So what is the answer to the question, good or bad? Yes, competition can inhibit your creativity, but only if you let it. I encourage you to let your creative artistic lights shine and to heck with the judges. Whatever your position, the goal of the VCC is to offer something for almost everyone. If you have an idea for a workshop or Special Interest Group (SIG) that may appeal to our non-competitive members, please let the workshop committee know.

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The pure enjoyment I get from staring at a beautiful photograph or piece of art borders on the ridiculous. I have been known to stare at an image that I took for nearly an hour, or a piece of artwork in a gallery for at least as long. I take photos because beauty gives me joy. This is what fuels my desire to photograph: the capture, creation, and sharing of something beautiful.

I started to experiment with cameras when I had a film point-and-shoot camera. A trip to Tofino found me pointing my camera at landscapes and landforms rather than just making snapshots of people. So seeing beautiful results was completely addicting! I eventually splurged on a cheap digital camera. Not having to worry about the cost of film while I figured out settings and buttons gave me an incredible freedom to experiment and play.

Photography was one thing that continued to lift my spirits and bring me a needed reprieve from the repetitive toil of lab work during my school years. When my excellent little 2 MP camera was stolen from my home in Malaysia, I bought another cheap point-and-shoot, but the poor quality of the captures actually brought me to tears on a trip to New Zealand when I couldn't adequately capture the incredible natural beauty that was around me. Finally being able to purchase a DSLR in 2012 was overwhelmingly wonderful in terms of both the increased ability to capture beautiful images, and the steep learning curve.

I believe there is something sacred about beauty. Beauty and nature have the ability to improve the quality of our lives. When I lived in Malaysia, I learned an interesting phrase from one of my local friends: "cuci mata." Directly translated, it means "eye wash." The concept refers to how looking at something beautiful can refresh and cleanse our selves. This phrase has stuck with me ever since. It inspires me to think that I might be able to refresh other people through photography.

As much as I love photography, I also enjoy learning and using editing skills. A camera captures pixels, but as artists, we can choose to enhance or change pixels in a way that is unique to our tastes. We take what the camera captures and turn it into exactly what we want and imagine. How powerful!

I also find that I have a desire to tell stories or explore a concept with my photography. As my friend Mark Ammen says, art isn't art until someone interacts with our image. I am most pleased with images of mine that tell a story or create wonder, that draw a viewer in to think about something more than just the observance of a well-executed photograph.



"The Gift"

This is an image that I hope tells a story bigger than just that of a man playing a violin. After the studio "business" images were captured (head-shots), we had some fun playing around with more creative images. This was one of the results.

What struck me the most is that this image doesn't highlight only one thing. It is a compilation of the creative gifts of so many people: an unknown Venetian violin maker who created this incredible violin; F.X. Tourte, who crafted the bow; Eugene Ysaye, who wrote the music Karl was playing; Karl Stobbe, who has studied violin craft for years; and myself, who designed the lighting and the capture of this image. So many people sharing their creative gifts, each of them caring enough to fill the world with more beauty and more art.



"Leading a Horse to Water"

When I got home from the shoot at the 2016 Hunter/Jumper Horse Show and looked at my images, it was remarkable to me that, although the place was crowded and busy, most of my pictures were about one thing, the relationship between a horse and his or her rider. All the hustle and bustle of the background was secondary to this quiet relationship. It was fascinating. This is one of my favourite images from the day.



“Gold”

So many things about this flower are so beautiful to me: the colour, the softness, the symmetry. I wanted to capture and share that beauty with everyone, and I'm hoping that this image does that. The image is not so much a showcase of photography; it is a showcase of a beautiful object.



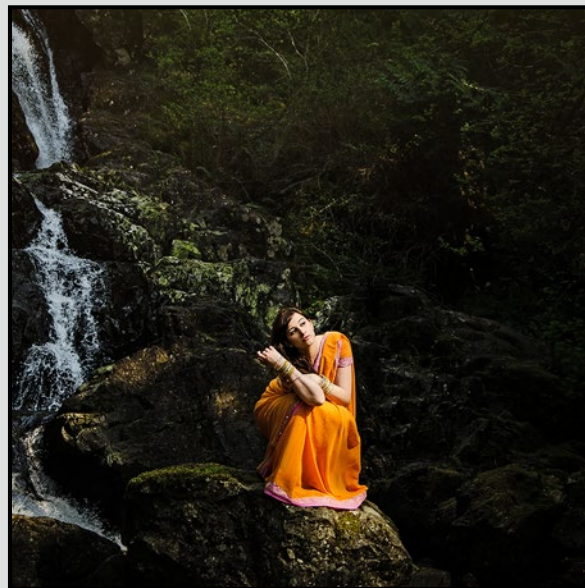
“Killin’ It”

Very few things can compare with the beauty and impact of capturing a real moment in the life of a human soul. Sara lives with anxiety and depression, and this image tried to capture something of that. I feel privileged that she chose to share that with me. After buying a DSLR, I chose to develop my skills in portraiture, partly because I liked it anyway, and partly in an attempt to have another source of income after coming down with a chronic illness myself.



“One”

I am most inspired when I shoot outdoors. The colours and shapes in our world are my favourite inspiration to shoot unique portraiture. How do the subject and the surroundings enhance each other? How do they fit together, or do they contrast each other?



“First Sari”

Portraiture will always be something I love, especially when I can blur the borders between portraiture and art. I find myself drawn to strong, clean composition, playing the subject and the setting off of one another if I can. Photography is always only a means to an end: how can I best highlight the subject?



“En-Route ”

A photograph taken in my self-exploration of the concept of transience. Here today, gone tomorrow. After having “achieved” my career and then having that fall apart after I became ill, this was, and is, a concept I need to keep exploring for myself.



“Cathedral ”

This image was a commissioned art piece. Three separate images were used to create it. I love the simplicity of photography but I also love the complexity of taking beautiful images and allowing my imagination to make something unique. I found making this to be an interesting challenge; working within preconceived boundaries wasn’t something my imagination took to very well. I guess it’s not surprising that creativity responds best to a “no limits” approach, be it limits from others or self-limits we impose on ourselves.



“Storm’s End ”

This is a simple, unedited capture. I took one look at the image and knew I had exactly what I wanted without any editing. The dark black of the clouds and the landscape dramatically frames the softly lit rays of the sun breaking through. To me, it is a symbol of hope and perhaps it conveys that idea to someone else who sees this image, rather than being just a “pretty picture.”



“A New Path ”

This picture was planned before any shooting was done. I had a model in mind, the dress, the location, time of year, and time of day. I also knew what I wanted to do in Photoshop after shooting it. That made shooting this image very fast; 10-15 minutes with the model and we were done.

We never really know what life has in store down the road. At some time, most of us encounter circumstances which move us off our planned and projected pathways. With this image, I wanted to celebrate the idea that those shifts, no matter how tragic or terrifying or unexpected, bring us new things, good things even, that we would not have experienced otherwise. New paths. New opportunities. New challenges. New friendships. New purpose. New beginnings.

I bought my first camera during my university days. I think it was a Pentax 35 mm, film of course. I took lots of what I thought were artsy creative images: that's what one did. I wasn't interested in learning about the technical aspects of photography. How difficult could taking a photograph be? In hindsight, most of my photographs were rubbish and fortunately they are no longer around taking up valuable storage space.

I spent most of my working life in Asia. You'd think the photographic opportunities would have been wonderful! And they were, but all the local commercial developers used tired chemical baths and over-developed my film, and it took six weeks+ to get Kodachrome 64 reliably processed in Australia. Many of our family photos look like a gathering of ghosts so my camera stayed mostly in a closet in order to avoid the indignity of dealing with developers. Yes, I could have tried using a darkroom. I laugh thinking of how this would have played out. To avoid dealing with film I tried video, first in the mid-80s with 25 kilos of VHS gear and later with a small Canon camera. Now I have hours of video that still needs editing. I'm hoping my kids are up for a project.

It took a move back to Victoria in 2008 and the digital wave to rekindle my interest in photography. I started volunteering with the Government House gardeners to learn about temperate climate plants. This led to taking garden photographs for their website, calendars and postcards. I bought a used Nikon D90, made an effort to read the manual and started to learn the technical side of photography. The gardens were a good place to practice as they provided a stable landscape with ever-changing light conditions. While I still shoot gardens, I found there were limits on creativity. It was time to expand my horizons.

I joined the Club in 2010 to improve my skills and meet others with a wider range of photographic interests. I've been fairly active in the Club's monthly competitions and have taken advantage of the learning opportunities and events available to members. As a result, I think I've become a much better photographer and I encourage you too to take full advantage of what the Club has to offer. I currently shoot with a Nikon D610, enjoy spending hours post-processing in Lightroom with NIK software, and really must learn Photoshop to create composite images. I'm looking for a new camera (where is the Nikon mirrorless?) as I want less noise when working in low light/high ISO conditions.

I have struggled with defining a personal point of view, and still do. I would like to be known for something more

than being a good photographer. On the other hand, there is freedom in not being limited by stylistic boundaries and expectations. I may never resolve this internal struggle so instead I'm going to focus on enjoying the journey.



"Bayview"

Neil Boyle shared his night photography skills with Club members in 2014 and promised to find us a dry spot if it rained. His idea of dry was a Dockside Green rooftop under a small umbrella in the driving rain. This image took eight seconds on a tripod. Lean to use your mirror-up (for those still using a DSLR) feature and a remote trigger for stabilizing your images. And carry a large umbrella.



"Bend in the Road"

I was in Spokane to celebrate an eightieth birthday in 2015. A good photographer is opportunistic; the Palouse was too close not to visit. While not the typical agricultural image this area is famous for, I like this evening shot of the Old Spiral Highway leading down to the Snake/Clearwater Rivers. The lone tree looks like it was intentionally planted for photographers.



"Two High"

Through Club connections, I have been welcomed into Ballet Victoria's world, from their gritty rehearsal space to theatre performances, and given amazing access to an extremely talented group of dancers. Aside from the photographic challenges, I've had to learn what makes a good image from a dancer's perspective. This image from a 2015 *Amadeus* dress rehearsal comes close to meeting a dancer's requirements, but needed some editing to remove an errant pointe shoe.



"Towards Vercovicium"

Sharon and I like holidays with a purpose: walking 135 km across England in 2015, from east to west along Hadrian's Wall, met our criteria. If you are mildly fit, the middle section of this walk, following the wall atop the crags, offers lots of history and great landscape views.

This image looks east from Sewingshields Crags toward what remains of the Roman Fort at Vercovicium (AD 122) in the mid distance. I HDR post-processed to boost the greens and greys. Expect overcast days, lots of rain and wind, uninspired food, and sheep.



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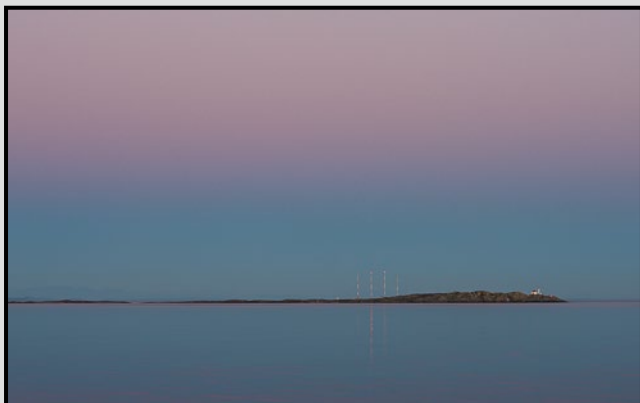
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*“Bethany”*

The Club occasionally organizes model shoots. I have enjoyed learning how to work with models and experimenting with controlled lighting. I've found the hardest part to be deciding what I wanted to shoot and how to communicate this vision. Images on the Internet are a good source of inspiration, and it's helpful to bring along images that you like to show to your model. Fly-away hair can be a problem. In this case there were gaps that created an imbalance, which required some cloning to bring the image back into balance.

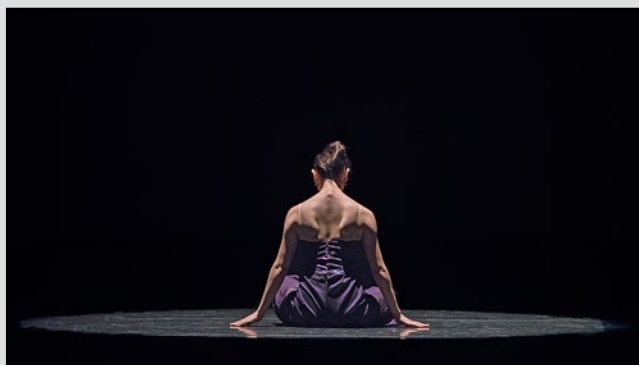
*“Waiting for the Supermoon”*

I went to Clover Point in 2015 to shoot the Supermoon rising, which turned out to be a big disappointment. The Supermoon, while colourful, appeared too late in its ascent to provide a dramatic backdrop behind Trial Island.

However, the colours before moonrise were amazing and reminiscent of soft blended pastels. This image reflects what my camera saw with minimal editing. Sometimes, a nice image will emerge when least expected, so I guess the lesson learnt is that the image you plan may not be the image you like.

*“Still”*

I have taken three photography courses taught by Mitch Stringer. The most recent course in 2016 involved emulating the work of a photographer. I chose Darren Moore, a young British photographer who works primarily in B/W to create ethereal, long-exposure images using neutral density filters. Visit his website (darrenmoorephotography.com). For me, the key to shooting like Darren was finding a strong element, this water outfall in Ross Bay for example, to anchor the image and then letting time, 20 seconds in this case, change reality.

*“The Sound of Silence”*

This image is from Ballet Victoria's 2016 *Ballet Rocks* dress rehearsal at the MacPherson Playhouse. I like the way the dancer, Yui Watanabe, is in balance and floating on a carpet of light before she explodes into a modern ballet piece. This image did not require any ballet insight to capture the moment, just the good fortune to be there for the rehearsal.

What I have learnt so far in my photographic journey is that I generally prefer images that are calm, uncluttered, architectural, and radiate an inner strength. While this doesn't solidify a visual style, at least it forms a basis on which I can possibly build one. Hopefully your experiences with defining a visual style have been smoother than mine, and you too have concluded that it is better instead to focus on enjoying the journey.



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by John Roberts

While not an overly technical topic, this is something that has had people at polar opposites for many years. Should you add a copyright logo to your images?

Many people feel that a logo detracts from the image, or is needless self-promotion by the photographer. "None of the great photographers have ever used them, so why should we?" Yes, it is true, well known photographers like Ansel Adams, Edward Weston and others did not have a logo in the corner of their images as we see online with some photographers today. That said, anytime they sold a print of theirs, many of them signed them, either on the back, on the front in the image, or possibly on the mat, where it was visible for all to see. When you think about it, a signed, printed image, was the equivalent of a logo or digital representation of your signature today. So how is it really any different, that is my question. The photographers of years past did not have the Internet to post their images to, where it is as simple to steal as a right-click! Sure, there are some website templates that make it harder to capture an image, but for those who are determined, there are ways to get around that.

Now I am just going to play devil's advocate for both sides of this argument.

Let's take a well-known photographer, Joe McNally, who has been featured in National Geographic, Time Life, Sports Illustrated and many more. If you go to the portfolios on his website, and look at his images, you cannot find a single logo or copyright logo in any of his images. That said, in the top left of the white border is his logo/signature, there is a stylized Joe, quite possibly an actual signature, and a typed McNally. So while his image does not have his name on it, Joe's "brand" is there, and as you go from one image to another, it stays right there the whole time. It may not be right in the image like some others, but it is there for all to see.

Now, let's take a look at world renowned wedding photographer Ryan Brenizer, who for many years has had a logo in his images, first a stylized RB with his name smaller and the website URL, with standout colours to make it clear it was his image, and currently just his name, slightly translucent, in one corner, but still able to be read.

So what is so different about the two? One brands himself subtly, the other more overtly, but which is which?

What do you think about branding logos in images?

I can see both sides of the argument, looking at some photographers websites, and seeing these big bold logos with bright colours, and others that stand out less, being small and translucent like Ryan Brenizer's. Then there is Joe McNally with his website being a field of white, with a bold and black logo on the top left. He is joined by many photographers who do the same sort of branding of themselves. Is one less offensive than the other? Therein lays the dilemma.

I know my thoughts on this matter are different from those of many photographers. My job is marketing and branding is something very important in my Monday to Friday work.

But suppose you do not make any money off of your photography. Is it then more or less important to "brand yourself?" And why should you brand yourself at all if you do not intend to ever make money out of your photography? These are very good questions and ones that really only you can answer for yourself.

Please contact me if you have any questions about this article at jrphotographybc@mac.com.



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by Rob Forbes

Digital photography has taken great leaps in capability with cameras that can capture an astonishing amount of data with a growing range of exposure and colour accuracy. But now that film is cheap (free once you buy a card), what do we do with the many thousands of pictures we have and how do we not get bogged down in the processing that we might want to do with them?

The computer system that a digital photographer needs is more sophisticated than the casual web-surfer and e-mailer needs, and a pro has even more requirements than an amateur. So, what are the considerations when selecting a computer for your photo editing?

I am a Windows guy who can spell Apple accurately seven out of eight times. This article is written with my Windows experience in mind but the general rules still apply whether you are a Windows, Apple or even a Linux user.

Computer specifications are a challenge to understand, and even more to compare between competing machines. There are certain key metrics to look at though, regardless of the laptop vs. desktop vs. tablet decision. The key considerations are the processors, memory, disk and display, but other items may weigh on your decision.

Everything about computer choices, just as when shooting a picture, is a trade-off and a compromise. When it comes to choices, the compromise is felt in your wallet.

Processor: The processor, or CPU, is the “brain” of your computer and everything that happens on it must run through it. Usually, the faster the processor, the better, but there is a trade-off in heat, power consumption and, of course, price. It is notoriously difficult to compare CPUs and what may appear to be a lesser capability may translate to better performance due to other factors.

All of today’s processors could be considered “fast” for applications such as word processing or web browsing. But, for photo-editing, you will want more than average speed. Modern processors are mostly running in the 2GHz to 3GHz+ speed range, and have multiple cores, but to maximize the performance of your processor, ensure that your computer also includes a capable GPU (formerly called a video card).

Memory: While computers can do many very complicated things very quickly, they don’t retain any of it for long. We all know about multi-tasking and that is what a computer does (sort of). It works on one task for a few

milliseconds and then moves to the next task for a few milliseconds and so on. While it is working on a task, it loads up the memory (RAM) with what it needs to know. Then when it goes on to the next task, it loads up RAM with what it needs to know for that task.

If you don’t have enough memory to hold all the tasks, then it has to write whatever it was working on to the disk (slow) in order to make room for the memory it needs for the next task. If you are asking it to do too much, it literally spends all its time reading what it needs to know for a task and when it gets to actually doing something, that task’s time is up and it unloads memory for the next task. This is called “thrashing” and you can see your computer just grind to a stop while the disk is being beaten up.

The answer to this is to add more RAM so that there is enough to hold all the programs and data that you will be using. The biggest RAM hogs are usually the Windows or Mac operating systems and there are some limited things you can do to reduce that, but the more RAM you have over this requirement, the more responsive your computer will be.

How much is enough? This is an answer often provided by the thickness of your wallet, but there are reasonable limits, and what is reasonable is also guided by which programs you use. For most computer usages, 8 Gb is a very reasonable number and this is what Adobe recommends you have for Photoshop. Adobe’s recommendation for Lightroom goes up to 16 Gb, surprisingly, but 8 Gb is a pretty decent compromise.

GPU: Most computers have an additional processor just for handling the demands of keeping up with the display. This Graphics Processing Unit, or GPU, was originally used for rendering 3D game graphics but it is now used for many other processes as well. Both Apple and Microsoft are taking advantage of the design features of GPUs to offload work from the CPU to make the computer go faster. Just like CPUs, GPU speeds are measured in Ghz, but also in how much memory is dedicated to support it.

This kind of memory is called VRAM. It is the memory that is provided for the GPU to do its work. It is more difficult to measure its effect, as it also depends on the way the GPU was designed, but a general thought is the more the better. Reviewing the different GPU options available to you is always a good thing to do.

Disk Drives: This is the fourth element in selecting your computer configuration. Disks are getting cheaper by

the week. This is fortunate as cameras are also producing images with larger megapixel counts by the week.

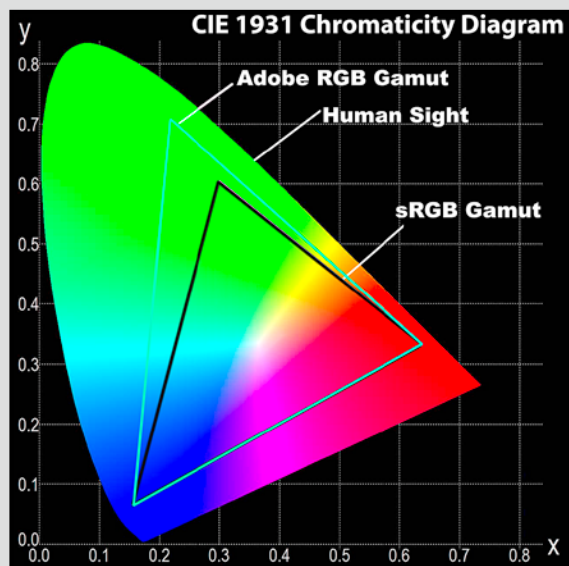
There are two types of disks: Solid State (SSD) and mechanical (HDD). Most computers will have a HDD of some size (usually at least 300 Gb) but you can get a SSD installed now from 100 Gb up. SSDs are much faster than a traditional HDD, but come at a higher cost. A typical configuration is to use a SSD as the drive you put your operating system and programs on, with another drive to put your files on. This configuration gets your programs and computer booting up and running quickly.

Mechanical drives that spin more quickly (10,000 or 7,200 vs 5,400 rpm for example) generally get the data faster. So if you are looking for a HDD that will keep up with everything else, faster rotation and faster data transfer speeds are key to success here.

Display: There are many options which will need careful consideration. Since the system we are building is intended for a primarily visual task, looking at, categorizing and editing photographs, image quality takes on a greater significance than otherwise might be the case.

The key for a good photo-editing display is accurate and wide-range colour rendition, whether it is your laptop or a separate external monitor. The range of colour and brightness that you can see are much greater than can be shown on a screen regardless of its quality. No monitors can reproduce what can see with your eye.

This diagram shows both the range of colour that the eye can see as well as the much smaller range that most good monitors can show, called sRGB. In the monitor



specifications you can see how close it comes to presenting this range of colours. The higher the percentage, the truer the colours will be. There is another range called Adobe RGB which shows more greens, but monitors that can support this in a meaningful way are pricey. (For example, a NEC monitor that is aRGB capable is twice the price of a similar monitor that is only sRGB capable).

Another factor to consider is its physical size and resolution. On a laptop, a 15" monitor is just about the smallest that is practical for serious photo-editing, but as an external monitor, 22"-24" is a reasonable minimum. The resolution should be at least 1920 x 1080 pixels (HD, 1080p).

Just like RAM, CPU and disks, the more capability you want in your monitor, the more you will have to pay. There is a point of diminishing returns though.

A 4K UHD monitor is 3840 x 2160 pixels, four times the resolution of HDTV. You also need to think about the size of the monitor. Depending on the pixel density and the size of the monitor, you may not notice the difference between 3840 pixels across and something less (and more affordable) like 2580 x 1440. A 19" 4K monitor will have a pixel density of 231 pixels per inch. A 19" 2580 pixel monitor will have a pixel density of 156 pixels per inch. Depending on how far you sit from your monitor, and your own visual acuity, you may not notice the difference.

Finally, getting value for money is the challenge. Comparing systems is not straightforward, but these key indicators will help:

Processor: Minimum 2 Ghz, but generally the faster the better, 3 Ghz+ with 4+ cores is recommended.

GPU: Minimum 1 Ghz and 2 GB of memory, but faster/more is likely better.

Memory: Don't skimp here or your computer will crawl. Minimum 8 Gb, 16 Gb will run faster with large files.

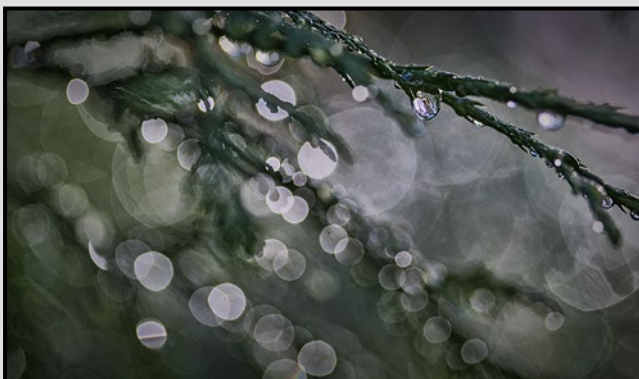
Disk: This depends on whether you are going to use an external drive to store your images. 500 - 1,000 Gb is a target range for data. You need to think about HDD vs SSD for the boot drive. Always have a backup of your data on a separate drive.

Display: Minimum resolution of HD (1080p) and minimum size of 15" (laptop) or 24" (external) will be satisfactory. The highest gamut (% of sRGB range) will give you the best color results.

Rain Drops

by Gordon Griffiths

I enjoy photographing raindrops after a storm or early in the morning after a foggy night. The droplets themselves can provide a fascinating photo subject. I usually look for a single drop sitting or hanging in a position that provides an interesting reflection of the surroundings or catches reflected light.



After a heavy rain, the branches of the cedars in our garden were filled with droplets all reflecting the sunlight. This time I chose to include as many drops as possible with one in sharp focus rather than singling out only one drop.

Equipment: To achieve a narrow depth of field and clarity of the reflection within or around the raindrop, a macro lens or close-focusing filters are the best option. One can get close to the droplets and create a soft, blurred background. A tripod and remote or cable shutter release are also critical elements.

Technique: Take images from a variety of angles. Set the camera so the sensor is parallel to the plane through the subject that you want to be in focus. I generally use aperture priority and shoot at a variety of apertures for different depth-of-field effects. The composition and focal point should be in or around the droplet. If you have the live view function on your camera, it is easier to use it to get a tack-sharp focus. If wind is a factor, you may have to switch to shutter priority. One can try external flash to enhance brightness and colour, but reflection from the flash can be problematic.

With an individual drop, one generally wants a background with soft colours and light that doesn't detract from the main subject. This certainly isn't the case with my image. However, I moved to be certain that the sun didn't blow out the highlights.

Patterns in Oil and Water

by Don Piper

This is a great way to have a little fun without having a studio setup in your home. I used my Nikon D7000 on a tripod on our back patio which had lots of sun. I shot in the shadows not in the direct sunlight. My wife is a quilter so I used some of her colourful fabric.

I started by laying a piece of colourful fabric on the deck. I then put water in a clear glass casserole, which is 11" X 18", making it about half full and placed the casserole on the fabric.

I poured enough vegetable oil into the water to pretty much cover the water, stirred it up with a small stick, and then waited until the bubbles settled down before I took my shot.

Here you can play with the oil. Start with a light sheen over the water, take a few shots then add more oil to your liking. Stir a little or lots, wait a second or two, and shoot your image. It takes a little playing around until you get patterns that please you. The pattern will change depending on the amount of oil you use, the amount you stir it up, and the time you wait until it settles before you take your shot. Try shooting with the light at different angles for different reflection effects.

Now take a different fabric and place it under the glass casserole and do it all again. The results will probably be quite different. It is a fun shoot and so easy to setup.



I used a Nikon 18-105 mm f3.5 lens at 105 mm, an ISO of 200 with an exposure of 1/25 sec. at f10. I also used a couple of Kenko Extension Tubes to get some macro shots which also changes the results. This fun idea came from photographer Bryan Peterson.

Tuesday Shoots

by Daniel A. Roy

The clock keeps ticking and another year begins. The holidays are behind us and it's time to walk off that extra helping of stuffing. Did you get a new camera or gear for Christmas? Tuesday shoots are an ideal time to demonstrate your new toy(s). Every photographer I know loves to see new stuff. So come on out and join in the fun.

January 3rd: James Bay. We will meet at James Bay Coffee & Books across the street from Thrifty Foods. The Competition Theme for February is "Monochrome Architecture" and James Bay offers a multitude of heritage homes for us to shoot. A 35 mm or 50 mm lens would be ideal. A tripod would also be an asset.

January 10th: Now and Then. Find an old photo and re-shoot it. What will you see differently? Will you shoot it from the same location or from another angle? Will you shoot it with the same gear or do you have a new lens or camera to try out? Has the lighting changed? Has the season changed? The same tree shot in June will probably be quite different in winter.

January 17th: BC Aviation Museum. Aviation history dating back more than 100 years is on display. Some of the aircraft include: a Harvard, Spitfire, Bristol Bolingbroke Mark IV, T-33 Silver Star, and a 7/8 scale replica of a Nieuport 17, one of the planes flown by Canadian WW1 flying ace, Billy Bishop, VC.

January 24th: Colours of Your Day. This theme is always fun. Search out your colour around the downtown core. Sometimes the colour will be obvious, almost slapping you in the face. Other times, you may have to look a little harder. Might I suggest using a macro lens?

Check out the club calendar for details for each trip.



Weekend Shoots

by Teri VanWell

There are three field trips that we are working on for the month of January. Please check the calendar for further information and dates.

Nicholson Manufacturing: The old days of logging are long past when rain pants were so stiff they would stand up by themselves and signals were relayed via a steam whistle, but a logging operation is still referred to as a "show." Modern shows use advanced equipment much of which is manufactured by Nicholson Manufacturing in Sidney, BC.

They are a world-class heavy equipment manufacturer with one of the most modern and complete machining, fabrication and assembly shops on the West Coast. Photographic opportunities include large machined and cast heavy equipment parts, partly built and completed log de-barkers, feller-bunchers and yarders.

Butterfly Gardens: Located in Brentwood Bay, Butterfly Gardens offers a unique opportunity for people to experience the beauty and curiosity of a tropical jungle up close. With surprises at every turn, the garden is home to a wide variety of rescued tropical animals including ducks, flamingos, rare tropical birds, poison dart frogs, tortoises, turtles, giant koi and free-flying tropical butterflies. Stroll along the paths and see vanilla bean vines, papaya trees, pineapple, coffee bushes, ginger and many other food plants of the world. Photographic opportunities include butterflies feeding on fresh tropical fruits, the rescued tropical animals in their habitat, and tropical plants.

Victoria Architecture Photo Walk: Set your camera to monochrome and join us for a stroll around downtown Victoria to see the old and new architecture that makes up this beautiful city. Watch the calendar for more details on this field trip.



by Deb Thurlbeck

Costumes are traditionally used in theatre or on Halloween, so why would we want to add costumes and props to our photos and how can we incorporate them to create a vision? How can we add that something special to enhance our photos or take them further and blend reality into fantasy?

Costumes can be great for producing a fine art photo, or a journey through conceptual photography where an exploration of feelings conveys an idea or message.



"The Raven's Wrath"

Using various costumes for a fun family shoot, portrait session or with a group of friends enjoying time together and capturing the images on camera can be fun and provide interesting images.

Costumes add an air of mystique or whimsy to your image. Masks and makeup give an air of anonymity that frees your models to unleash their inner spirit. Adding some well placed props will add visual interest and assist the viewer to engage with your artwork.

Planning a shoot involves picking a theme and finding appropriate costumes. Look in your closet and, if they let you, your friends' closets. What lurks in the recesses may surprise and inspire you. Wander through thrift stores, party stores or possibly costume rentals for something specific. Vintage clothing and antique shops are also great resources. Autumn is a wonderful time of year to stock up on costumes and accessories as the stores are

preparing for Halloween. Sewing or crafting skills are not necessary but may help in altering what you have found.

Once you have an idea, decide whether this is a studio shoot where your background will be added in Photoshop, or an outdoor shoot that will complement your theme. Keep an eye out for possible locations or take photos of backgrounds when you are out with your camera. File these away in a folder for future use.

Macaulay Point Battery and both Craigdarroch and Hatley Castles make interesting backdrops for a medieval battle theme. Props help to give the scene authenticity. After all, a warrior cannot battle without a sword, shield or axe. Encourage your models to play their role and do battle and they will relax and learn to handle their weapons naturally. In return, they will have fun and provide many great images. Remember that historical accuracy isn't nearly as important as making it look real and exciting.

Graveyards provide a Gothic feel, while alleyways and graffiti walls lend themselves to a grunge theme. Please remember to be respectful of both the location and other visitors in the area.



"Moonlit"

Props should be meaningful to the photo but should also look natural for the scene. Some objects or a touch of colour can add to the scene, but be wary of overwhelmingly complicated images. Consider how the props interact with the story you are telling. A Victorian garden scene might have a well dressed lady wearing a hat, holding a delicate teacup and with a heirloom rose



"An Evening in LA"

beside her. A coffee cup and an iPad would confuse the message. Even having her with a period appropriate umbrella, horse, or carriage, might be too much for the shot if it is all in the foreground. Balance is necessary.

Keep in mind the fabric as well. An authentic medieval costume would be made of wool or linen, a renaissance period costume may be silk, taffeta or velvet. Many modern fabric blends can achieve the same results. What is important is the way the fabric drapes or hangs, its texture and sheen. Even in a modern day shoot, the reflection or absorption of light should be acknowledged. The appropriate drape of the fabric should be a consideration. Will the fabric have enough drape to flow the way you want or will it have enough stiffness to provide the structure and crispness to achieve the desired result?

"The Raven's Wrath" was shot on location at the Roundhouse. This is a terrific location that unfortunately will be lost to progress as the area is redeveloped. The photo depicts the Raven in "attack mode." I created the mask, and made the cape out of a blended fabric that flows well. The weapon came from the cache in our Halloween cupboard. The head was one of four that was found at the scene and incorporated into the photo making a case for how an idea can evolve during a location shoot. The blur of the weapon and the severed head depict movement as does the billowing cape. I chose to post process in monochrome to give the photo an ominous ambiance.

"Moonlit" was a studio shoot using a white backdrop. Cigar in hand and martini within reach adds to the allure of her story. Different shades of red are perplexing and add conflict to the relaxed and nonchalant pose of the model. The moonlit sky heightens the surreal setting and was added in post-processing from photos on file. The costume was from our collection and the props used are household items. The studio provided the couch.

"An Evening in LA" was shot at Zorthian Ranch in the hills of Altadena, California. It has a rich history and a plethora of eclectic objects that exude visual qualities in terms of texture, form and detail. The model was placed in a rusted chair suspended in midair by a hook and chains. An old truck peeking from behind completes the scene as the LA sunset provides the backdrop. This contrast between dressy and deteriorated is startling. The beaming facial expression conveys how much fun the model was having and the photo is a treasure for her.

Using full or partial costumes, masks, or adding simple props such as a hat and walking stick will add flair and uniqueness to your photos. This concept works both with your staged photos and portrait shoots. Keep it personal and special on a portrait shoot by adding meaningful items such as a soccer ball or violin. This would provide family and friends with distinct photos to cherish.

Alternately, challenge your artistic inner self by infiltrating the miniature world. Create a whimsical adventure scene that blends fantasy and reality with minuscule props. An idea that starts out simply as fun might evolve into a fine art photo or a series for a calendar or slideshow that can be shared.

We can challenge ourselves by stepping out of our comfort zone. Using costumes and props flexes your creative muscle and may spark inspiration for a new project. Exploring different ideas, concepts and perspectives helps us improve in all aspects of our photography. Take time to absorb all forms of art from books to music, paintings and sculptures. This will help you get a new angle on your photographic vision.

Here are two interesting links to ten conceptual photographers plus two artists creating miniature worlds:

illusion.scene360.com/art/85059/dark-conceptual-photography

mymodernmet.com/profiles/blogs/talented-artists-creating-magnificent-miniature-worlds

Selecting Images for Competitions

by Josée Ménard

Believe it or not, master photographers are just as intimidated by competitions as novices. Competing provides an avenue to share your work, to challenge yourself, and to grow as a photographer. It is one of the paths on the road towards improving your own photography.

One of the first steps towards deciding to submit an image is all about reading. Going out in the field can wait and so can sorting through your images for the Great One. Log onto the Club website, find the link to the competitions, find something of interest then read its description and its requirements. Now, think of an idea in your mind and prepare for your photographic outing. At the same time, you may have images that pop to mind, have a look at those too.

The next step involves your evaluative eye as it surveys your images. To assist your eye, you need to prepare your room and your monitor. For your room, reduce its brightness. Too bright, it will drain the colours out of your image and impact your evaluation and editing. How dark should your room be? Dark enough to make it difficult for your eyes to read print. You, the judge, the viewers need to see red as red rather than a variant of red. Several methods exist. The best is to purchase a good quality monitor calibrator. Alternatively, include a piece of white paper in the corner/edge of an image. In processing, make sure that its RGB colours read very close to 250/250/250. If it does not look white, you need to adjust your monitor.

Now go through the following basic questions to assist your selection. Select (with a star) the images that meet the requirements, that capture your eye and tell your story. The selected images now need to pass inspection.

- Which best meets the competition's requirements and description? If it doesn't, it is out of contention.
- Is your subject focused? If not, it is not a candidate unless that is your intent.
- How do the elements in your image contribute to the story you are telling?
- Which image best communicates with your viewer?
- Which one best invites the viewer's eye and keeps it within the photograph?
- What about your image catches the thought process and maintains it?

- Are there areas too over- or under-exposed to be recovered in post-processing?
- Is there detail in your whites and blacks? Can you bring them out?
- Are there distractions drawing the eye away from your main subject?

The elimination process is complete, you can now refine your chosen image for final production.

- How level is the horizon? Adjust as needed.
- Play with the Rule of Thirds. How does it improve your story, invite your eye even more. Does it free your subject from the edges; give it more room to move as the viewer scans your photo?
- Adjust the exposure, contrast, highlights, shadows, colour balance, vibrance, noise, etc. as required.
- Save this as a master file that you can come back to.
- Crop it to the required aspect ratio: 3:2, 4:5, 11:17, 14:10.5 etc. As you crop, ensure you do not cut off the tips of petals, the elbow off the model, etc.
- Finally, resize the image to the correct dimensions or pixel size and sharpen it for output as a new file.

As you work through your post-production, take a break, then return with renewed eyes. See your image from a distance as you view it on the full screen. Ask yourself, where is my eye drawn to? What bothers me? Play with it, turn your image upside down, what did you miss or is more evident? If you wish, ask someone to look at it; look at their eyes studying your image, their interest level, their first comments. Do they get your story or see something else? What comes to mind first?

Finally, a title. Titles are like the icing on cakes, some are good, some not. Carefully choose one that will assist the viewer or judge. As much as they provide an insight into your thinking, they may also assist with the message.

Submitting your photographs is courageous. Opening yourself and reflecting upon the judges' constructive tips and comments is a step towards improving your photography, your art, your storytelling.

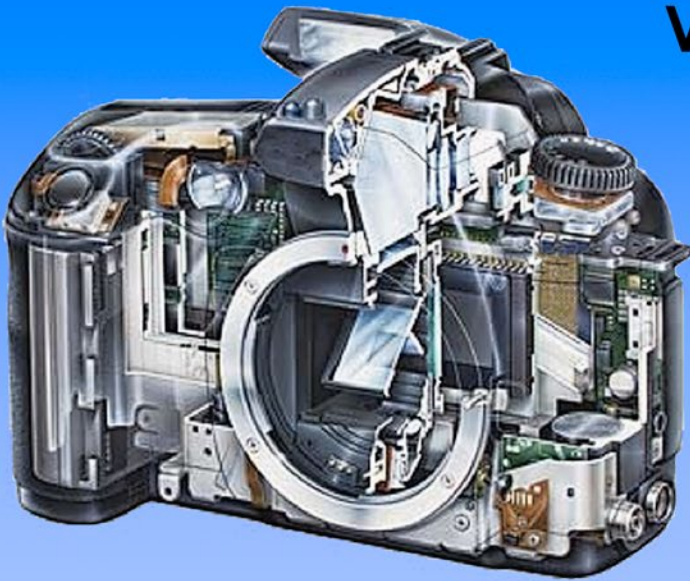
If all goes well, kudos! If not, then the rejection, confusion, and the given tips need reflection. Once your emotional phases have passed look again, attempt some of the tips, see how you can improve your photo, its title, its adjustments, its elements. After all this, some will be worthy to enter, some will remain just for you.

I am looking forward to seeing your photographs at competitions or in our website galleries.

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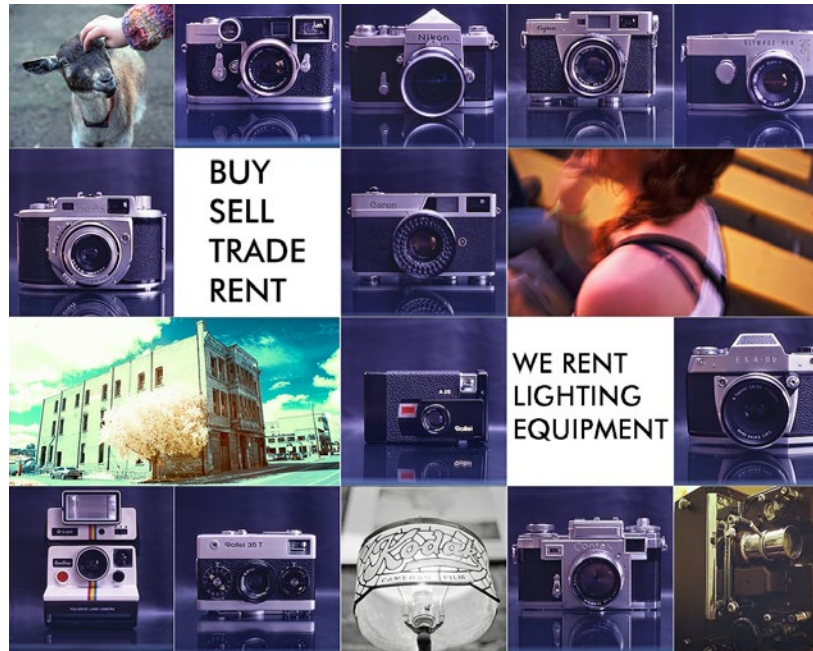


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