"Sydney Klein, Milk Bath Series" by Richard Letourneau

Victoria Camera Club   May-June 2022 Volume 75 Number 5

"Victoria Cityscape" by Cindy Stephenson

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
- Shared Interest Groups (SIGs)
- Competitions within the Club and externally

Meetings begin at 7:00 PM. All meetings, workshops and SIGs 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*.

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What's Inside

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 programs are too extensive to list in *Close-Up.* Please go to the calendar page on the website (*victoriacameraclub.ca/club/clubschedules.aspx* for the latest details of all our workshops, field trips and meetings.

Workshops, Meetings and SIGs are currently on-line only. Please check the calendar for updates.

Meetings will resume in September 2022.

The Annual Competition Night will be held on September 9th this year.

Workshop Highlights: May: Portrait photography and Fundamentals of Black and White photography.

Field Trip Highlights: Mary Lake, Heritage Acres, Classic Cars, Street Photography, Saltspring Is., and Comox.

Cover Image: "Sydney Klein, Milk Bath Series" by Richard Letourneau. Five years ago, I had the pleasure of photographing Sydney Klein (from Coultish Management), during a milk bath workshop led by the renowned photographer, Von McNelly. Von has been a commercial, fashion and fine art portrait photographer for the past thirty years, working in locations around the globe.

A nice warm bath of powdered milk was prepared in a bathtub. Various props, like artificial butterflies and florals were available to complement the composition. Because of the confines of the bathroom, the lighting setup was quite simple. A strobe was positioned adjacent to the tub and was directed toward the ceiling to provide reflected light into the tub below. Secondary light came through a window. A camera-mounted wireless transmitter triggered the flash.

I was able to shoot multiple images, positioning Sydney and adding or repositioning props between takes. I cautiously straddled the tub all the while hoping a slip of a socked foot on the porcelain tub's surface would not result in an unexpected bath for two! The settings used on my (then) Canon 7D Mark II with a 24-70 mm lens were ISO 400, f8, 29 mm, and 1/125th second.

The RAW files were processed in Lightroom. Lens correction and sharpening were applied, then exposure, contrast, shadows, whites, blacks, and clarity adjustments helped to complete the final image. Blacks were dropped by 33% because of the strong contrast of her dark auburn hair with the white milk. I appreciated the opportunity to do such an interesting and fun shoot!

Executive Report

As the VCC photography season closes, we have much to celebrate and to reflect upon. First, to celebrate, after many months of meeting on Zoom, that we are now back to meeting in person at Norway House! We have taken it for granted, in the past, that we can socialize with whoever we want, whenever we want. COVID has shown us that we are social animals and meeting at Norway House has been greatly missed in so many ways. Not everyone will want to meet in-person and that's OK. Those who wish to attend a meeting from home can do so, making this a positive outcome from the COVID pandemic. Who would've thought?

Thank you to our two Presidents who each had to resign for personal reasons. We appreciate you volunteering for the leadership role and for knowing when it's best to resign and let someone else step in. It takes courage to do so and we thank you for your contributions.

Many thanks go to so many volunteers this year. First and foremost, to Richard James, the *Close-Up* team and our writers for their outstanding contributions over the years in producing our award-winning magazine. It has become a challenge to sustain it in its current format but that does not mean it has to cease to exist forever. The next Board of Directors can discuss alternative formats having learned, over the past years, the areas with which volunteers are willing to become involved and have time to contribute to. Stay tuned!

Next, our website team of Richard Letourneau, Greg Blaney and newest member, Doug Layton. Without your constant attention to activities, news and galleries, we wouldn't know what was available to participate in! Thank you for everything you have done and continue to do.

To all the Competition, Workshop, Field Trip, SIG, Members' Night and Presenters Night volunteers, you are so valuable to this Club. Never forget that you make this Club what it is. We don't want to lose sight of the synergy that we have and that other Clubs tell us they do not have.

To all those who have joined VCC in the past year, welcome! Get involved, learn, shoot but don't forget to give back. Volunteering is always welcome in ways you may not even realize so don't be afraid to ask how you can help. It is so important and very much appreciated.

So, in closing, the 2021/22 Board of Directors for VCC wishes you a wonderful summer of great photography. We, together with the new members of the Board, look forward to seeing you in the Fall. Be safe and have fun!

A Way of Seeing

by Liz Conway

Everyone has heard over and over about the rule of thirds and that rules are good guidelines. I guess I do that instinctively, but rules are also there to be broken, and can have many variations. My own thoughts align with the Art Nouveau movement which in turn was inspired by the study of Japanese prints in the 19th century (see *bit.ly/3JXsTrh*).

Art Nouveau holds that all space we look at and live in is made up of positive and negative areas. All have to be in balance and defined only by space and line. For example, this is illustrated by the work by Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, Mary Cassatt, van Gogh, etc in whose work you can see that depth is flattened and instead indicated with lines. It was a radical departure from the traditional paintings of the time, and a new way of seeing.

Look at the Art Nouveau posters produced for the *Harper's* magazine May issues (*bit.ly/3rbSB4j*). In the "woman with dog" poster you will note the light, positive, space flows from the border into the model's dress and that there are flat negative areas and lines.

I use these concepts in my own artwork and other designs. I find that I look through the camera as the frame, not cropping later at the processing stage. Doing that does amazing things in changing how you view the larger area.

One way to help the eye select from the multitude of subjects that the camera can be aimed at is to cut out viewing window sheets from thin cards in the correct size ratios. They could be "standard" ratios like those in the graphic, or could be your own preferred ratios. Keep these with your camera equipment and take them out to experiment with by moving the window around and closer and farther away from your eye to see your sub-
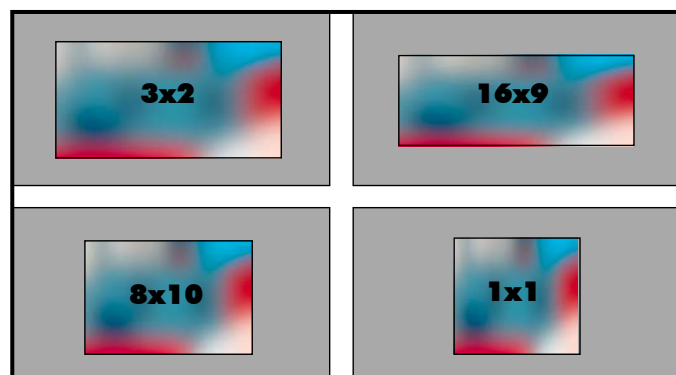

"Various Viewing Windows"

ject in isolation from the surroundings. This way you are cropping and framing before you take the picture.

Another trick is to squint your eyes to blur the details and colours so that you see only the dark and light areas, your positive and negative spaces.

This idea of "space placement" is similar to that used in Japanese prints with their large clear areas, referred to in the first paragraph. When you plan the layout for an advert or magazine cover you place blocks of various sizes representing the pictures and text. That way you have a balance with each element at the right size that doesn't detract from the message and that works with the picture.
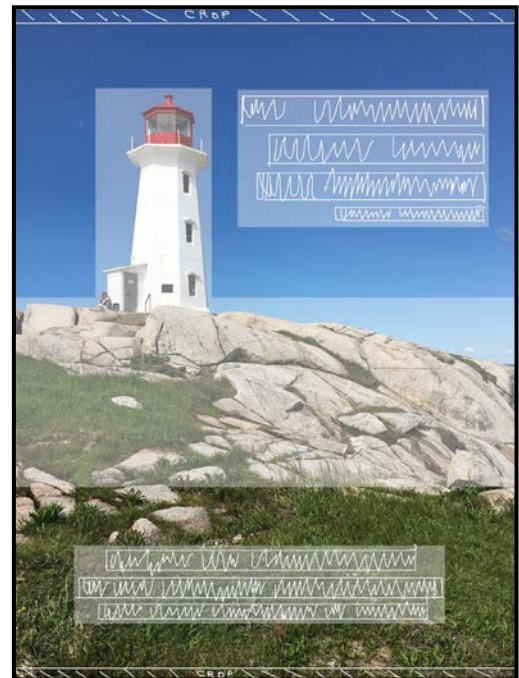
"Peggy's Cove Lighthouse"

If your objective is to have a block of type for the title or description you can plan it as part of the weight and space placement. This planning, that will keep you from cropping out useful parts of the image, is very helpful if the image is to be used for graphics where the dimensions or proportions are fixed.

In the Peggy's Cove Lighthouse image, you can see that proportion requirements result in some height being cropped from both the top and bottom. I have aligned the heading with the top of the lighthouse and weighted the bottom space with secondary information. The weight of picture and type elements are shaded. To decide on the layout a layout artist plans by experimenting with sketched image frames and scribbled lines of text of the correct height in different areas. All of this utilizes the lines and positive and negative spaces as seen in Japanese woodblock prints.

My Thoughts on Street Photography

by Bill Green

Well, first let me reiterate the definition of street photography as I see it. Quite simply, it is the taking of candid photographs of people in a public place. It could be on the streets of New York City or on the plains of Nairobi or here in Victoria.


"Action"

Street photography didn't start out this way. In its early days it was simply photos of streets and buildings. Prior to the 1900s, cameras often didn't have the speed to capture moving subjects well. As cameras changed and became faster our thoughts about "street photography" changed. But understand that street photography doesn't have to include human figures; it simply needs to reflect the human condition.

"Saanich Fair"

Do you want to be better? Then learn more about your camera. Cameras are different these days, they are much faster with lots of capabilities. The better you know your camera, the better you'll be able to be effective at street photography. Learn as much as you can about the work of others. Read photography books, take workshops, watch YouTube videos, get RSS feeds. Be a sponge.

Your camera setup is important, so you should spend time thinking about what works for you in this important step. I'll explain my setup and why.
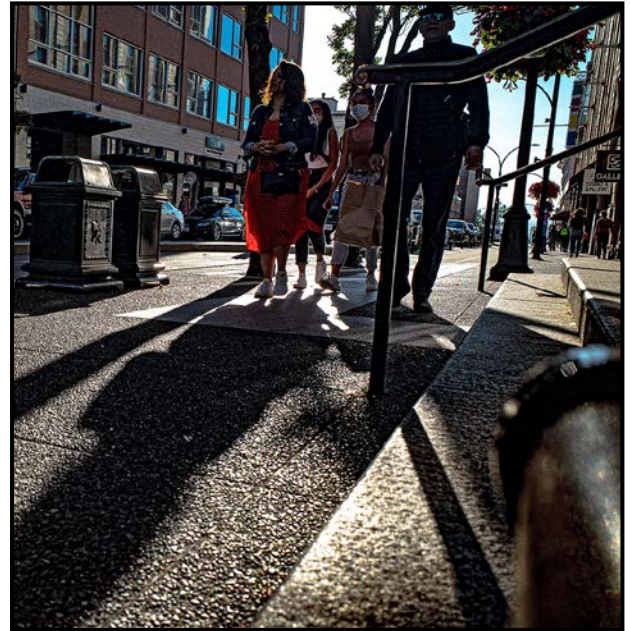
"Drama"

Most of time I'm using zone focus; trying to get as much in focus as possible. Before I walk out the door, I look at the light, and set up my camera to suit. On a bright sunny day settings would be: floating ISO, shutter speed 1/650th to 1/800th sec., aperture f8, focus fixed at two meters, slow continuous drive. If I see a subject moving into position, I don't have anything to do but frame and shoot. My thought is that underexposure is the street photographer's friend. If you're going to make a mistake, make it underexposed so you can recover it in post-processing. This exposure rule applies only to digital shooting; if you're shooting negative film, always strive for overexposure. Think about your go-to setup, define your own intention, and find a setup that enables you to be ready at all times.

Here's looking at you, kid! When you go on our street field trips do you go out with intention? Do you have project folders to fill? You need to develop your own projects. So, what do I mean? A project can be built around a key colour, reflections off of water or windows, shadows, silhouettes, blurred images in motion, panning moving subjects and so much more! Develop your own projects

and one day you might publish or exhibit your own work. The photos in this article relate to different projects I'm pursuing. Two great books to grow yourself are: *52 Assignments: Street Photography* by Brian Lloyd Duckett and *Street Photography Assignments* by Valerie Jardin.

Let's talk tactics. Every street photographer is a combination of hunter and fisherman. A hunter walks or runs to pursue their subject. A fisherman finds a spot and waits for the subject to come to them. Tutsuo Suzuki is a well-known street photographer. Appearing in a Fujifilm video to introduce the X100V camera, the material was abandoned and Suzuki was dropped as a Fujifilm ambassador because his methods were seen as too aggressive. Far worse is New York photographer Bruce Gilden, aggressively standing to block his subjects, running them down, often shooting with flash. Bullying tactics can make dramatic photos. But does the end justify the means?

"High Contrast B&W"

In *How I Make Photographs*, Joel Meyerowitz mentions childhood walks with his father in the streets of New York City. His father was not a photographer but he had an inquisitive mind. Often, he'd tell his son something like, "Watch closely, in a moment they're going to kiss." At an early age, Joel learned to always anticipate that stories happen and that you have to take the time to see them. This is a great book at a low price, I highly recommend it.

Think about how you think and how others see you, or not. If someone's talking to someone, they're less aware of their surroundings, easier to take their photo, right? On a bright sunny day, you stand with the sun at your back, they have the sun in their face. They will have difficulty seeing your camera in shade. The more distractions your subject has, the less likely they'll notice you. And remember, it's always important to avoid eye contact.

"Window Reflections"

My camera has a glass viewfinder that sits on top. Remember, my camera is set up in advance. All I have to do is frame and shoot. Standing in the narrowest part of Fan Tan Alley I'm looking through the viewfinder as someone approaches from the south. When they get close, I drop my camera from my face to acknowledge their passing but that's when I'm really getting the shot using the LCD. Think about it, most cameras today will allow you to do the same thing; and some allow you to touch/shoot from the back screen so your forefinger isn't on the button. Other cameras might have different limitations. Your job is to overcome them.

Street photography takes persistence and hard work, but the challenge is worth it.
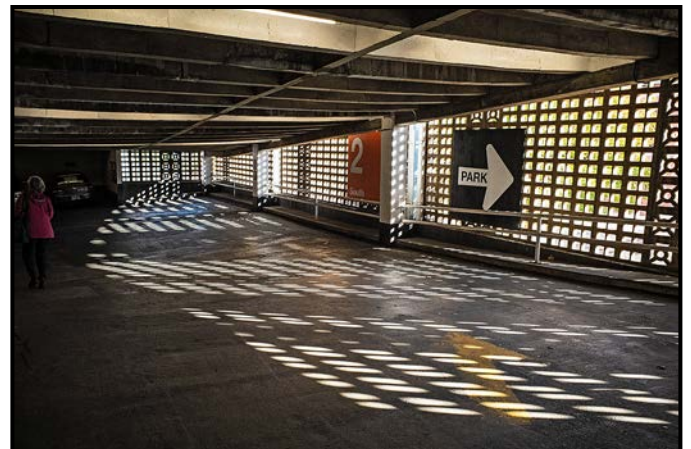
"Parked"

Workshops: Summer Reading?

by Jim Fowler

Another season of speakers and workshops is coming to a close. As I look back at the array of presenters who inspired, tantalized, and amazed us, and explained all things photographic to us, I ask myself which aspects of the various presentations tended to assist me the most. If I could identify those elements that moved me, perhaps I could more precisely determine the photographer I wish to become.

I found I was less moved by the technical aspects, perhaps because I have spent the past several years improving my technical abilities and what I want now is to better understand the artistic and creative aspects of photography. I know I will never devote my time to getting the perfect wildlife photo. I am too old to want to climb mountains or brave storms to obtain a unique shot. No, what I want is to understand why some images resonate with me and some do not. Can I learn to see in a more meaningful way?

I accept the science that our eyes can only record data on differences in light, shade and colour, then send that data to the brain. The brain analyses it and passes it along through ever more complex stages, from simple differences in tone, edge recognition, shape, known objects and on to related feelings and memories that speak both to the common experiences of humankind and to our own unique memories and precepts.

It follows that what appears to me to be real is a construct of my brain. You might see details of which I am oblivious and if your retinas are missing one type of cone, you will fail to see some of the colour differences that I see. We can identify "doggishness" without a precise knowledge of all breeds of dog. The world is real but we "see" what our brain can interpret.

Several of the speakers this year addressed the issues of selecting the best way to portray what we see and eliminate all the extraneous noise around that vision.

Kas Stone said she would ask herself three questions: "What do I see, what do I think and feel in response to what I see, and what do I want to say or show about how I feel?" Kas spoke of driving past a bog over and over again before, finally, she stopped to ask herself these questions. Only then did she come to realise that the simultaneous decay and new growth meant to her something to do with death and rejuvenation on a very primordial level. It was only when she understood what moved her that she could begin to pare down the scene to eliminate all the unnecessary bits and show only the essentials. Only through simplification would she have a chance to show us what she experienced when she saw the bog.

Kas told us that she worked with Guy Tal who takes a different approach to finding a meaningful image amongst chaos. He suggests finding something that interests you, looking intently at that "something" until you have thought of many different ways that you might photograph it and then, choose one "way". Then, he says, work on that one shot, choosing the point of view, lens, and framing. Eliminate extraneous details. Finally, he says, figure out how to control where the viewer will look when looking at the image. Guy gave us a reading list to help understand what is currently known about how we see. Rudolf Arnheim, in *Art and Visual Perception*, has very precise details about balance, shape and form.

Rick Hulbert has read Margaret Livingstone's work *Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing*. It was Margaret that pointed me to Alfred Yarbus's work on how people look at pictures, moving their fovea to collect detail, which in turn started me thinking that we had to understand how people would look at the final image before we "collected" our basic data in the first place.

Rick believes that scientific knowledge is one of the three arms of creativity, along with free association of ideas and personal experience. We must imagine the final image before we press the shutter. Does this sound familiar? Doesn't it remind you of Ansel Adams imagining how the sky will darken with a red filter so that he would then be able to bring out the contrast he wanted in the darkroom?

Margaret also explained how the sensitivity of the visual cells, to changes in tonality, made our vision more sensitive to relative tonality than to the exact shade of large areas. Our eyes and brains are designed to see abrupt changes in tonality.

Joseph Finkleman told us that raw images need better definition in the mid-tones, which includes all the tones between white and black.

Rick Hulbert showed that he used the "de-haze", "detail" and "texture" sliders in Lightroom to add definition to mid-tones. Why not manipulate the tone and colour to emphasize the details we know our brain will seek?

The workshops and presenters will stop over the summer but you can use the summer to pursue whatever aspects of photography you most want to improve. I know I will.

Tech Tips: HDR Images

by Richard James

High dynamic range images (HDR) came up recently in discussion with a member So, what are they?

Film had a limited dynamic range (usable range between highlights and deep shadows) and it was difficult to do much except modify exposure and darkroom processing. Early digital cameras suffered from the same problem.

"One of a Five-Image Set"

With today's digital cameras it is easy to combine parts of separate images into a composite where both highlights and deep shadows are fully detailed. Several programs can do this with more or less success. The key is to make the image look "natural" unless you deliberately want to exaggerate it. Eventually the technique made its way into Photoshop and Lightroom. However, specialist software still provides more flexibility in merging and adjusting the images.

Sensor technology has evolved from the original 8-bit sensors to record 12- to 14-bit information which is saved in raw files. An in-camera JPEG still only records 8-bit images. This means that you can record a wider dynamic range in-camera and HDR has become relegated to just the most extreme situations.

Since it is still useful, I will review some things you need to know about using it. Since any automation in the camera (auto ISO, aperture, shutter speed etc.) will change things in unpredictable ways it is important to do these images using fully manual settings.

Aperture: Since aperture controls depth-of-field, you need to shoot all the images at the same aperture. You need to pick an aperture with adequate depth-of-field to show the important parts of the image in-focus.

Shutter speed: Determines how much a moving object will be blurred. Generally, it needs to be high enough to stop any movement. This would include wind blowing leaves around or waves on the beach. Remember that, because the objects are moving, they may be in different positions in each frame which will pose some challenges in editing.

ISO: Determines how much the electronic signal generated by the light striking the sensor is amplified before it is recorded to produce an acceptable image. Normally, you want to keep the ISO at the base setting (64, 100 or occasionally 200) as specified by the camera manufacturer. This gives the highest dynamic range and minimum noise. As usual, there is a balancing act between aperture, shutter speed and ISO to achieve the best compromise.

The shooting technique is to take a series of frames, usually two stops apart in exposure, starting with one that is a bit under-exposed, maybe by one-stop to ensure you capture full detail in the highlights, a "normal" exposure and then a series of over-exposed images until the left-hand end of the histogram is well clear of the edge. This ensures that you have adequate detail in the shadows.

Many cameras allow you to do exposure bracketing. You pick the number of increments and exposure step value, and then make sure that it is the shutter speed that is being changed.

"Final HDR Image, Bow Lake, Banff NP"

Generally, the only equipment you need is a good stable tripod and a remote release as you do not want any camera movement between frames.

Whichever software you are using to process the images the procedure is generally the same. The initial blending is as a 32-bit file in order to preserve the full dynamic range. This image is not viewable properly on a computer screen, so it then has to be converted into a 16-bit image. This is where you make whatever adjustments the software allows to compress the dynamic range and produce an appropriate representation of the scene. You then save the file as a TIF/PSD for further processing as required

Competitions: Words of Wisdom

by Lorna Zaback

Competitions are a big part of the Victoria Camera Club's activities. Lately, the Internal Competitions Committee has been hearing the odd "rumbling" about the (un)fairness of competitions, judges' scores and critiques not being impartial, etc.. Even a few references to the pointlessness of competitions can be discouraging. We start asking ourselves, "Should VCC continue to hold competitions? Are they worth the effort?"

We believe that VCC members continue to support competitions, we just weren't hearing the evidence. So kudos to James Dies, our intrepid Board liaison, for putting out the call. And thanks to those of you willing to speak so eloquently about the positive aspects of competing.

For Maureen Reid (Intermediate), competitions offer a chance to get her own work "out there", or to see, and learn from, what others are doing. "I really enjoy seeing the variety of images that members enter. I find the slideshows of competing images the highlight of the month".

Richard Letourneau (Advanced) says, "I value competitions for the feedback to improve my work. I tend to compete against myself, not others. If I love my image, that's all that really matters. Remember that, as the image maker, you were there, you experienced the moment and the setting, you interacted with your subject. It was a meaningful experience for you."

It is important to remember that everyone looks at images differently. Even an experienced CAPA certified judge's comments are one person's opinion. If your image receives a glowing critique, you can be pretty confident that you are on the right track. If there are suggestions for improvement, include them in future images.

Steve Lustig (Advanced) talks about what it is like to take a deep breath and "dive in": "I was quite apprehensive and intimidated about entering my first VCC competition, afraid of being embarrassed. However, once I "took the plunge", I found the judges' comments very useful and incorporated suggestions into future images."

Some encouraging words from a member who started competing as a Novice: "I found that by entering competitions my least successful images have provided the greatest learning. The worse they scored, the more I learned, so I use competitions to gain valuable feedback. Of course, it stings a little at the time but I don't let that stop me from trying again next month."

March 2022 Competition Judges

We sincerely thank our external judges listed below for the March Intermediate and Advanced digital competitions and Advanced print competitions.

We also extend thanks to our in-house judges for the Novice digital competitions: Pam Irvine, Lorna Zaback and Nicci Tyndall. Images and judges' comments are available at: *www.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.

Francois Cleroux: Open. Francois currently lives in Delta and is a CAPA certified judge and a past-president of the Delta Photo Club. Among other genres, he has worked in fashion and wildlife photography. Francois lectures and teaches various photography workshops and classes.

Gilles Vezina: People. Gilles has been an active member of the RA Photo Club in Ottawa since 2003 and is currently Vice Chair of the club. Gilles is an experienced certified CAPA judge, an eclectic shooter at ease with nature, sports, dance, travel and event photography.

Derek Hayes: Theme (Bridges). Derek lives in White Rock, and is a certified CAPA judge. He enjoys a wide range of photographic styles including travel photography. He has taught photography and hosted a photographic tour of historic Spain. Derek conducts workshops and publishes photo books.

Gregg Eligh: Altered Reality. 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 has taught continuing education photography courses at Camosun College. Gregg has worked across North America and the Caribbean doing corporate, editorial, catalogue and advertising work.

Ed Moniz: Prints. Ed formally studied black and white darkroom printing and photography and completed a one-year mentorship program with George DeWolfe. He is a former member of the Victoria Camera Club and has presented several workshops in Lightroom, Digital Editing and Fundamentals of Black and White.

Fall 2022 Visual Arts Courses

Course planning for the fall term is currently underway. Expect a range of photography classes from camera basics to working with natural light and landscape photography.

We also offer a number of visual arts classes of interest to enthusiasts and professsionals alike.

Visit our website to stay up to date on all of our photography and visual arts courses or call 250-721-7797.

continuingstudies.uvic.ca/photography

University of Victoria

Advanced Altered Reality - 1ˢᵗ
"Fly at Your Own Risk" by Normand Marcotte

Judge's Comments: A strong concept that is well executed. Enough said.

Advanced Open - 1ˢᵗ
"Landfall" by Kim Smith

Judge's Comments: A great image with sharp clear details and great texture on the rocks. The sharp spray of the crashing waves looks great. Using black and white was a good choice here. It is nicely cropped.

Advanced Wildlife - 2ⁿᵈ
*"Galapagos Iguana" by Anne McCarthy*

Judge's Comments: Master of his domain, it is made to appear all the more powerful by this interesting composition and the choice of a wide-angle lens. It is well composed.

Advanced People - 2ⁿᵈ
"Concern" by Richard Letourneau

Judge's Comments: The scene triggers questions and emotions. The black and white treatment works well as does the composition.
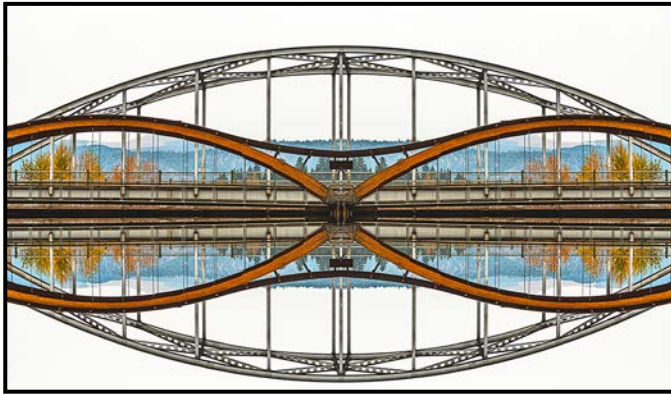
Advanced Theme - 1ˢᵗ
"Two bridges over the Tulameen River with Reflection"
*by Jim Fowler*

Judge's Comments: This image has good use of colours, light and a strong composition. Good use of cropping and sharpness in critical areas adds to the impact. A great photo from an unusual midstream point of view. The symmetrical view works well. Well done!

Advanced Nature Print - 2ⁿᵈ
"Locked on Target" by Jill Turyk

Judge's Comments: Technically this image is well captured. The bird in flight is sharp and the exposure is good. Good work.
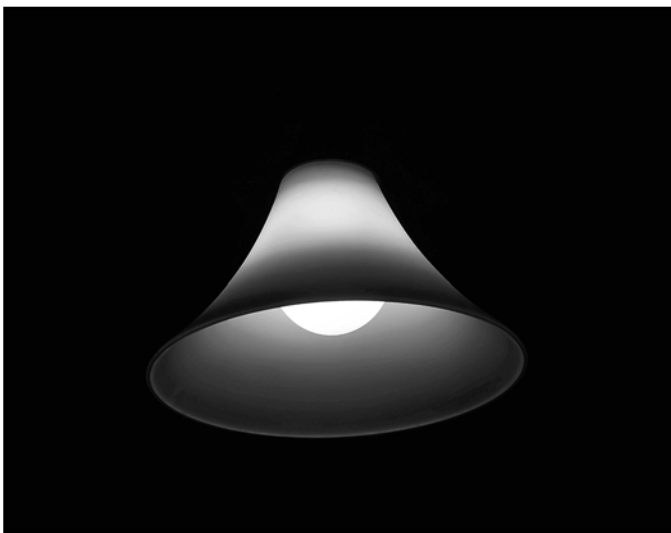
Advanced Monochrome Print - 1ˢᵗ
"Over Our Breakfast Table" by Garry Schaefer

Judge's Comments: This type of image is made for a black and white print.

Advanced Open Print - 2ⁿᵈ
"Pyramid Lake" by Steve Lustig

Judge's Comments: Good composition with strong leading lines. Good timing with the lighting capturing the glowing effect.

Intermediate Altered Reality - 2ⁿᵈ
"When Ice and Steel Meet" by Geoff Squarok

Judge's Comments: This is a very dramatic image with a bold sense of "solid". The specular light is a prime element in the composition. Well done. The limited elements in the background being out of focus give scale and "placement" that works well in this case.

Intermediate Open - 1ˢᵗ
"High-key Cacti" by Alec Lee

Judge's Comments: A beautiful image that has been well composed and processed. The subject and background suit the fact that the image is oversaturated (but controlled) without loss of details. The post-processing has been handled very well. The colours of yellow and blue anthers and filaments along with the rest of the colourful hues are beautiful. Nicely composed and post-processed. Print it on glass and hang it on a wall!

Intermediate Wildlife - 1ˢᵗ
"The Struggle" by David Russell

Judge's Comments: Talk about telling a story! A nice capture by the heron and the photographer.

Intermediate People - 1ˢᵗ
"Sly Glance" by Joanne Couch

Judge's Comments: Despite a tight composition and distracting background, the image is strong thanks to the expressions of the two individuals. Good sharpness of the main character and soft pastel colour palette contribute as well.

Intermediate Theme - 1ˢᵗ
"New Blue" by Graeme Weir

Judge's Comments: The image shows good use of colours and cropping with a strong composition. A striking image. Here the abstraction caused by dark sky works very well.

Novice Theme - 1ˢᵗ
"Japanese Bridge at Butchart Gardens" by Chris Vardy

Judge's Comments: The photographer has created a unique composition by leaving the bridge red and converting the rest of the photo into black and white. Good sharpness and tones throughout and the lines of raked gravel lead the eye into the rest of the image. The three large rocks in the foreground give a sense of balance. Nicely done!
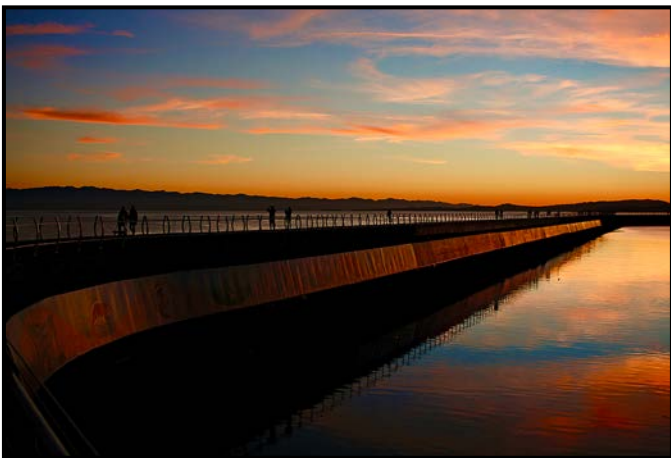
Novice Open - 3ʳᵈ
"Breakwater Colours" by Stephanie Benoit

Judge's Comments: A beautiful evening photograph of the breakwater with the structure forming a strong leading line into the distant sunset. Well captured hues and sharpness.

May-June 2022

Colourful Images

by Penny Codding

Georgia O'Keefe said, "I found that I could say things with colour and shape that I couldn't say any other way, things I had no words for". Often my favourite photographs are also about colour and shape, whether minute wildflowers, delicate and sensuous curves of petals and leaves, emotional expressions or gestures of dancers, or colour seen through the shape of a window.

My relationship with wildflowers started with their colour and with hikes in the Canadian Rockies. Sometimes each person in our hiking group carried the same flower identification book, one that correlated the page's edge colour with the colour of the flower. We devoted ourselves to identifying the flowers based on colour. We were so keen to know their names that we ignored Claude Monet's advice "to see, we must forget the name of the thing we're looking at". Photographs documented our finds. For this purpose I carried a DSLR film camera on all hikes and thereby learned that having a camera at hand caused me to look at everything more closely, practicing what Freeman Patterson calls "the art of seeing". In addition to the Rockies, I risked the conditions of early summer hiking in the French, Swiss and Italian Alps to see the tiny and tenacious wildflowers that brave the weather. An example of the rewards of early season hiking and of using a DSLR to achieve shallow depth-of-field, is this image of the dime-size blossom of the Véronique petit-chêne (Little oak speedwell), which appears as the snow melts.

"Véronique petit-chêne (Little oak speedwell)"

Moving to the west coast provided me with new wildflowers and photographic opportunities at lower elevation and with less snow. Over time, I became more interested in expressive images that focused on the colour and shape of the flower thereby illustrating the delicacy of the petal or leaf and the feelings evoked by the flower. The image of Shooting stars evokes the joy the blossoms bring as they dance in the sun and breeze.

"Shooting Stars"

It took a lot of searching for me to find the uncommon Chocolate lily. This image, made by combining the blossoms with an image of a colourful, lichen-covered gravestone, depicts the reverence I felt when looking though my lens at this rare blossom and its exquisite leaves.

"Chocolate Lily"

Another of my favourite things to do is attending dance festivals in Centennial Square. I am particularly attracted to tango and flamenco music and dance. Both traditions began as ways for isolated or marginalized people (working class immigrants in Argentina or gypsies in southern Spain) to express feelings of isolation, longing, and heartbreak. The tango was born in the immigrant areas of Buenos Aires in the late 1800s. The music and the

dance communicated the feelings of nostalgia and longing of those far from home. In time the dance was adopted in Europe and evolved to have many styles yet, the tango is always a romantic dance of embracing partners in which feelings of love, passion and longing determine their movement.

In 2014, at the Victoria Tango and Latin Music festival I was charmed to see audience members dancing the tango in the Square. Much like the populist beginnings of the tango and the street festivals of today's Argentina, people of all ages were on their feet seductively dancing in the embrace of their partners. Many feelings were on display, from delight in the movement, to intense concentration on the footwork, to more romantic and passionate emotions. I created this image to depict the tenderness of this couple.
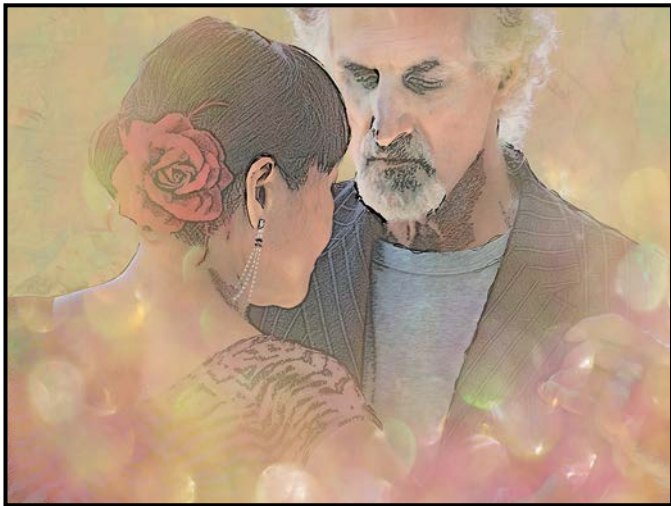
"Tenderness"

I discovered flamenco dancing at the same festival. This dance form originated with gypsies and other repressed groups in Spain and was named flamenco in the 19th century when it moved out of gypsy settings into cafes. Originally it was a unique raw form of singing that railed against troubled destiny, misfortune, betrayal and the disappointments of romance. As the form evolved, flamenco dancing and flamenco guitar grew to have a more prominent role. Both are more familiar now than the rough-voiced original songs although the tone of misfortune often remains. In flamenco, the dancer often dances alone accompanied by guitar to tell a serious, tragic or emotional story through movement of upper body and limbs plus rhythmic footwork. Expression of the inner emotional resources of the dancer or guitarist is central to the success of the performance. I am intrigued by the contrast between the intensity of this art form and the elegance of the costumes and performers. So I return year after year to the Victoria Flamenco Festival to take on the challenges inherent in photographing the beauty and intense movement of the dancers and

the emotionality of the performances despite the difficult mid-day light and cluttered setting of the festival.

"Bailaora flamenca"

The last favourite thing I'll mention is a window. Windows are interesting photographic subjects because they connect two worlds, within and without, past and present through colour and light. They communicate between those inside and the world, thus the exterior of windows can be enlightening, particularly when you are in an unfamiliar place. Window coverings, cleanliness, state of repair are all symbols of the lives and vulnerability of the inhabitants. Another view of the world is also provided by looking out of a window.

This is described best by Canadian artist Maud Lewis who said "How I love a window…It's always different. The whole of life already framed. Right there".

"Chiloe Window"

2022 Frank Turner Award: Richard Letourneau

by Jacqui James

Each year the Victoria Camera Club recognizes a member with the Club's most prestigious award, the Frank Turner Award. This award recognizes the ongoing dedication and significant contributions of a member of the Club and their demonstrated excellence in the art of photography. The award was created in 1987 to honour Frank Turner, a long-time member of the Club. Frank was an accomplished photographer who won many awards for his art and was a vital member of the Club for many years.

This year the committee, (the last three winners, Bobbie Carey, Richard Webber and Jacqui James) is proud to announce that this year's recipient of the Frank Turner Award is Richard Letourneau. Richard is an accomplished photographer as well as a dedicated volunteer. He willingly gives his time, energy and skills for the benefit of the entire Club and is always willing to help others.

"Pandemic Party"

Richard was instrumental in keeping our Club alive and vibrant throughout COVID. Along with Kim Smith, he set up the Zoom Committee. They initially trained committee coordinators as Zoom trainers. This endeavour facilitated our rapidly increasing on-line presence when we could no longer meet in person. Richard continues to host Zoom meetings for the Club, including those with other BC and Alberta clubs. Our online presence has allowed members to access presentations from a wide pool of expertise from across the world.

His expertise as the Website Administrator for four years helped solve issues quickly and efficiently. He made it a priority to enhance the website during his tenure as Administrator. He also managed both of the Club's Facebook pages. He served on the Internal Competitions and Workshops Committees. Richard has contributed several articles for *Close-Up* and his member profile may be found in the January 2019 issue.

Richard steps in where there is a void. There was a good chance that there would not be an Eastwood competition this year because no one volunteered to take on its oversight, but he stepped up and saved the day, the Eastwood competition took place successfully. He also initiated and coordinated the "My Image/Your Edits" project.

"Now That's Fast"

His photographic expertise has advanced rapidly. He joined the Club in 2015 entering Club competitions as a Novice and is now in the Advanced category. In 2018 he won the Intermediate Distinguished Photographer of the Year award and in 2021 he won, along with several other members, the President's 2021 special award for dedicated volunteers. Richard's image, "Milky Way at Whiffen Spit" was on the cover of the December 2021 *Close-Up*.

Richard has a great sense of humour that shows up both in his attire and in his photography. Many will recall his distinguished tuxedo, his shiny patent leather shoes, along with the jaunty Santa hat he wore as emcee for one of our Christmas parties, lending a definite upscale note to the affair. Who knew he could also play the piano?

His images often tell a complex story with a great deal of detail. Some of his images are very humorous and often surprising in content. He has fun with photography as can be seen in his take on life during the pandemic. He asserts that creating images that convey emotion is the heart of fine art photography.

Always an avid learner and willing to help advance the Club's endeavours, Richard is a most vital and valuable member of the Victoria Camera Club and a deserving recipient of the Frank Turner award for 2022.

Some Lens Myths

by Roger Botting

A while back I was talking to a fellow scuba diver who had just bought a new underwater camera rig. He was wondering why his photographs looked fuzzy, especially compared to mine. We have similar equipment, so I looked over his for the obvious, auto focus not working, fingerprint in the middle of the lens and then asked about his settings. f22 he said, to get lots of sharpness and depth of field. His eyes glazed over as I discussed diffraction, circles of confusion, the possibility of suspended objects in the water being nearly in focus, and then I said use f11. I guess he listened because he no longer shoots fuzzy photos.

All lenses are miracles of compromise. Thousands of factors go into the design of a lens, but we will discuss a few concerns.

Lens sharpness: Most general-purpose camera lenses are designed to have maximum sharpness at about two to three f-stops closed down from their maximum aperture. Why? Because that is the most commonly used f-stop range. The compromise is for maximum sharpness in the range of most common usage. Expensive, very fast lens are usually designed to be sharpest at maximum aperture, after all, if you are spending a couple of thousand dollars for a super-fast lens wouldn't you want it to perform best at its maximum aperture? Stop the lens down and you could get by with a much less expensive and smaller lens.

Minimum f-stop: f16 to f22 is probably the range of least sharpness of your lens. With a few exceptions, most lenses are not designed to work best at small apertures. At very small apertures the "Airy Disk", that is the smallest point to which a small circular aperture can be rendered, limits lens resolution. This is an optical effect where light focuses into a set of concentric rings (the Airy pattern). The larger the effective aperture of the lens, the finer the detail that can be seen on the focal plane. And detail is usually equated with sharpness.

There is also the general diffraction effect of the diaphragm, light bends around sharp edges such as the lens diaphragm. Think of waves going around the end of the Ogden Point breakwater. Light travels in waves and, passing by the edge of an object, causes some of the light waves to bend. You get diffracted waves. The same happens with light, more as flare, an overall foggy look and is worst at very small apertures. Small apertures also produce the "starburst" effect. So, should you want a nice sunburst, use f22. Besides, you paid for a fast lens, not a slow lens.

Focusing distance: Like all compromises, lenses work best at a predetermined focal distance. Macro lenses, for instance, generally work best between ¼x and 2x life size (measured at the focal plane), an aerial photography lens would work best at infinity (or very close to it). General purpose lenses are best at mid-distances.

Depth-of-field: This concept generates the most confusion. It can be best described as the range of acceptable focus. That is, from front to back of the main subject, the image sharpness range that is acceptable to you, the viewer. Depth-of-field has nothing to do with the lens focal length. As an example, take two photographs at the same f-stop, exposure, etc., but use two lenses of different focal length. Make the image the same size (magnification) in a print. You will find that they have the same depth-of-field, the same points are in or out of focus. Wide-angle lenses look like they have more depth-of-field only because you have less subject magnification and the object planes look further apart. Coincidently, they will have the same perspective. Depth-of-field is related only to f-stop and image magnification on the sensor. As another example take a just barely out-of-focus photo. Print it small and it looks sharp. The more you enlarge it, the less sharp it looks until it is of unacceptable sharpness.

Lens resolution: Lenses focus light onto the focal plane to make the image. Image sharpness is usually measured by line-pairs per mm, how close can the two lines be before they appear to blur into one line. There are two major factors at play, and they work against each other: the ability to distinguish the line pairs apart and the amount of contrast between them. Some lenses favour image sharpness and some favour image contrast. If you can't sleep some night, start researching this.

Sensor resolution: You might think that having a high-resolution sensor would give you sharp images. Yes, if you have great lenses and no, if you don't have great lenses or don't use them well. A high-megapixel sensor will show all the fine detail of your great lenses, it will also reveal all the less-than-perfect aspects. Meanwhile, a lower megapixel sensor will give the illusion of greater sharpness, mostly by exaggerating the edge effect of detail. Back when Kodachrome was the definition of sharpness, we had many great lenses. Many of them don't look so great on a 40+ megapixel camera.

The conclusion? Go take pictures, keep your lenses clean, don't drop them, use good shooting techniques, and learn from your triumphs and failures.

# Shooting around the Harbour

by Garry Schaefer

In 2005 Margaret and I moved from our condo on Sturgeon Creek, in Winnipeg, to our current condo home on Victoria Harbour. That was quite the change of scene! The day we arrived we visited a family friend in the Laurel Point condo. She remarked, "Here comes our Coho" when the horn blasted as the ferry approached the Inner Harbour. From that moment on we have treasured the Coho's presence, both for the ride it offers across to Port Angeles, and for the pleasure gained as we watch it come and go on its multiple daily trips.

"Coho Incoming"

The Inner Harbour has always been a place where people gather to enjoy one another's presence and to experience the numerous festivals and fairs which take place there. Although interruptions occurred during the pandemic, things are now coming back to life. The Water Ballet, performed by Victoria Harbour Ferries, is one of the enduring delights of the April-October season each year. When you hear the strains of the Blue Danube at 10:45 each Sunday, be sure to head to a good vantage point near the CPR Steamship Terminal
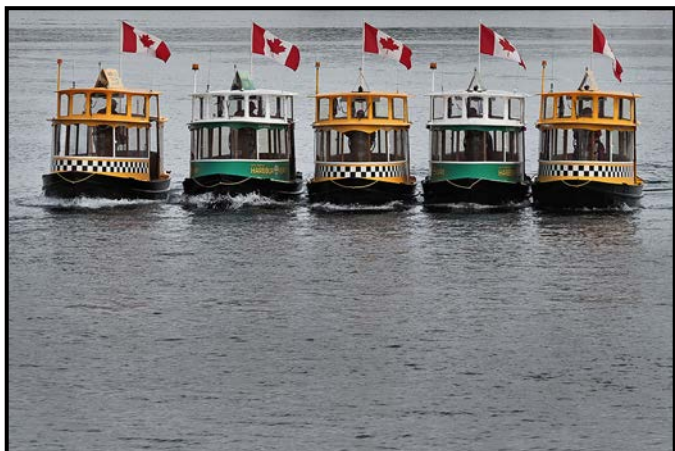
"Victoria Harbour Ferries Water Ballet"

Building and be prepared to enjoy the show, camera in hand. At other times take in outdoor concerts during the Blues Bash, the Jazz Festival, Symphony Splash, and other events or enjoy the performances of a variety of itinerant buskers around the Lower Causeway and elsewhere nearby. If you are into street photography, this is also just the place to stake out a spot and watch for opportunities as interesting characters stream by.

Waters from Portage Inlet, through Gorge and Selkirk Waters, Victoria's Upper, Inner, Middle and Outer Harbours and around the tip of Vancouver Island to Ten Mile Point are all part of the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary established in 1923. Despite urbanization and associated industrial development many opportunities exist for close-to-home wildlife photography. Both migratory and year-round resident birds can be seen throughout the area.

One of my delights is to spend some time with a patient Great blue heron while it fishes for herring, this time right in the Inner Harbour. Numerous other species populate the harbour. Black oyster catchers, glaucous-winged gulls, crows, Canada geese, a host of dabbling and diving ducks, and many other species frequent the area.

"Great Blue Heron Fishing in the Inner Harbour"

On one cold December morning a few years back, we spotted a juvenile brown pelican resting on a piling at the docks below our balcony. When I got down there, amidst the falling flakes of a morning flurry, it was clear that the bird was shivering and in some distress. My photographs revealed a leg band. An Internet search indicated it had been banded under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. It had failed to stick with its flock when they departed Victoria for warmer climes to the south. The sighting was reported to the SPCA but the bird's fate was unknown. In the world of wildlife there are always subjects worthy of your attention in Victoria Harbour.

When I first moved to Victoria, the iconic Blue Bridge on Johnson Street separated the Inner and Upper

"New Bridge Inauguration"

"Float Home Enroute to Fisherman's Wharf"

Harbours. Following the planning and design stages in 2009, a decision was made in 2010 to construct a new lift bridge at the same location. Members of the VCC Tuesday group paid attention to the demise of the old bridge, its decommissioning and removal. The new bridge was inaugurated on March 31, 2018, to considerable fanfare. For those who enjoy photography in the blue hour or even during the night, views of the raised span, illuminated by blue lights that are reminiscent of the bridge it replaced, provide compelling scenes from various vantage points around the harbour.

In the years that I have lived here, Fisherman's Wharf has been transformed into both a local and a tourist attraction. Various eateries and tour operations have been established on the docks. Commercial fishing boats are arrayed on the western end. Private yachts populate the fingers in the centre.

Thirty-three attractive and sometimes quirky float homes adorn three fingers on the eastern end of the wharf. Subjects that will catch the photographer's eye abound. Admittedly, however, boundaries are now in place which preclude entry into private spaces, formerly open to curious tourists as well as local photographers.

By paying attention to local news sources one is often informed of opportunities to capture events of note. One such case involved the transport, from Sooke, of a newly constructed float home destined to fill the last of the available spaces at Fisherman's Wharf. The image shown here was taken as the colourful addition to the community neared the docks on its inbound journey.

The images and anecdotes above concentrated on the Middle and Inner Harbour areas but things don't stop there. You can hike the Westsong Walkway to the West Bay Marina or take a short trip beyond the Johnson Street Bridge to the Upper Harbour, the Selkirk Waters and further to the Gorge Waters. The activities of the Gorge Narrows Rowing Club, the scenic Selkirk Trestle, the Reversing Falls at Tillicum Narrows and many other subjects beckon.

We are fortunate, indeed, to have such a rich environment so close to home in which to exercise and hone our photographic interests and skills.

How I Did It

Christ Church Cathedral Re-imagined

by Mary Weir

I have photographed the interior of Christ Church Cathedral a number of times and I am always impressed by its beauty and grandeur. This time, after taking a number of shots, I decided to create some more interpretive images that would, hopefully, express how the cathedral made me feel.

I wanted to try multiple exposure so there would be a multiplicity of images overlaying each other. I decided to do a multiple exposure of three images. Sometimes, less is more and particularly so when the subjects are quite complex.
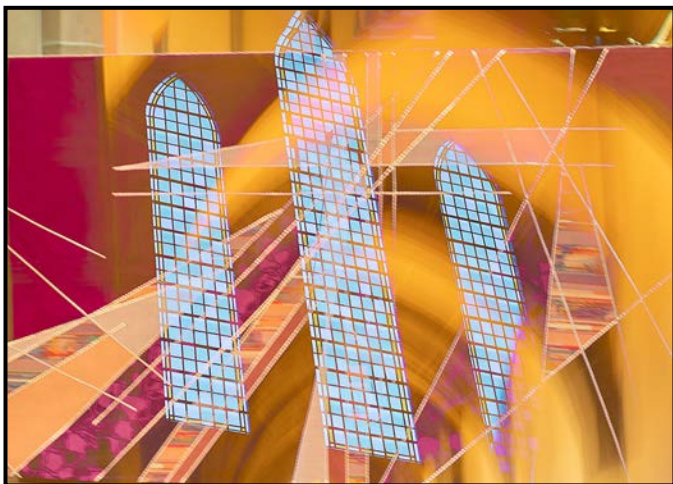
My camera has four options for multiple exposure control and I decided to try the bright mode. I wanted the bright features of the images to be part of what I was trying to express. Lastly, I put my tripod aside because it did not matter if the verticals were not vertical.

The first image I shot was of a fabulous tapestry. I wanted the colours in the tapestry to be the base image for what I was creating. The second image was of the ceiling. The third image was of the windows and here, I tilted the camera so that the windows were at an angle. The light streaming in through the windows helped create the image I wanted. These images were combined in-camera.

Because this is a multiple exposure image and I didn't take note of exactly where I stood and how I tilted the camera it would be very difficult to recreate this image. However, the colours, the shafts of light and the windows combine to give me a feeling of happiness and peace, a worthwhile achievement in today's world.

Esquimalt Lagoon

by Pearson Morey

My original image did not turn out as I had envisioned when I took it. At the start of the event it was very cloudy, foggy and dull. The morning was starting to brighten up to the northeast but was still very dull to the southwest which was the picture I wanted. I liked the idea of the picture, but it was not sharp enough for me. I opened the image in Picasa, chose the *Even More Fun & Useful Image Processor* and picked *Sketch*. I then opened the *Radius & Strength* sliders and set them to their maximum and repeated the action a second time. I also moved the Fade slider to maximum.

Those actions gave me the black and white line drawing I wanted. I then used the *Fun & Useful Image Processor* and the *Film Grain* slider and adjusted the slider until I had the effect I wanted. This brought out shading and some highlights in the sky and water. I also checked off the *Lighten* box.

I then opened the *Even More Fun & Useful Image Processor* and the *Boost* slider which brought out the cloud formation and the reflection on the water. Photoshop Elements was next and I opened *Artistic Filers* and *Posters Edges*. I adjusted the sliders until I was satisfied with the image. I went back to Picasa and opened the *Fun & Useful Image Processing* menu and adjusted the *Tint Slider* until I achieved the look I wanted.

Lastly, using Picasa I put a double border around the image to keep it from falling out. In the *Even More Fun & Useful Image Processor*. I picked *Museum Matte*, *Outer Colour* and *Outer Thickness*. Then pick what satisfies you in thickness and colour. Repeat this for the inner colour and thickness. This version of the image is a little different from the original photo I posted because I could not repeat the same process I originally used. It's close enough to get the idea of what I did. The main thing is to have fun and enjoy experimenting with all the tools available. Hmm, I wonder what would happen if I tried that feature?

Shoots Around Victoria

Heritage Acres

by James Dies

If you have driven north along the Pat Bay Highway towards the ferry at Sidney you may have noticed Heritage Acres. What you see from the road is only a small part of the whole complex of 10.5 hectares of amazing historical artifacts and buildings hidden behind the trees. The Saanich Historical Artifacts Society (S.H.A.S.), has preserved the way of life of rural Saanich as it was in the early days of the last century to near the present.

They have an unbelievable 30,000 plus artifacts in their collection and there is no way that someone would be able to see or photograph it all in a day, or even a week. There is just such an amazing variety of things that a photographer could shoot all day long.

"Pioneer Kitchen" by Richard James

Sit in a two-room 1913 schoolhouse, the pioneer chapel, or a replica log cabin the early settlers used. There is a working blacksmiths shop, a working sawmill, and several other buildings.

There is a general store stocked with items that a farmer's wife would need in 1910. There is a haberdashery, a music room with a nickelodeon and a newsroom with old fashioned printing presses. There are collections of antique thimbles, medical equipment and recording machines. The list of collections goes on and on. It is an eclectic mix of just about everything.

Outside, scattered all over the grounds and in equipment sheds are farm tractors in various states of restoration. They include very early gas and steam tractors. Some of them are still running and are shown at different events throughout the year. There are various other pieces of farm machinery and water pumps.

One of the best times to go is during the fall Harvest Festival in September when they bring out the old threshing machine and stationary steam engine to power it. It's exciting to watch all those pulleys, belts, wheels, chains, and levers spinning and whirling. Watch the steam engine puff away and the grain being fed into the thrasher by hand. A good way to capture some action is with a slow shutter.

"Fall Threshing" by Richard James

If you like photographing antique cars there are several car shows spread throughout the year. In some years military buffs will set up an WWII army camp with vintage motorcycles and Jeeps. Check the website below to see what's coming up.

If you are a kid under 75 years old and you like trains you can take a ride on the scale model trains that run through the park on their own little railway line. It is run by the Vancouver Island Model Engineers. Their website is at *vime.ca*. The trains might be fun to photograph.

Something interesting to do is to wander off the main trails, go behind the buildings and explore in the bushes and trees for artifacts put there and forgotten about by the S.H.A.S. You will never know what you will find back there. The pond is also a great place to find Pacific tree (chorus) frogs in the brushes. They are like tiny green jewels.

The Club has organized a field trip here on May 8th at 10 am. I am assuming it will be open by then but, if it isn't then I can contact the president of the S.H.A.S. and arrange for a group visit. They are at 7321 Lochside Drive in Saanichton. The entrance is at the end of the road across from Michells Market on Island View Road.

There isn't an "entrance fee" but a donation is expected. A donation of $5-$10 per person would be fair. Check out their website to get a better idea of what there is to photograph. *heritageacresbc.com*.

Topaz AI Can Save Your Images

by Bob Law

Topaz offers specialized photo enhancing software for "saving" or enhancing images. From time to time, we all miss the focus, are forced to use a high ISO, use a slow shutter speed that creates blur, or experience degradation of an image due to severe cropping. These images often have good light and composition but are not technically acceptable. Topaz has three tools that could save the day. I do most of my processing in Lightroom, so I use the Topaz suite as plug-ins. If an image is not acceptable due to excessive noise or is blurry or slightly out of focus, I will send it to one or more of the Topaz programs, for "clean-up".

I do my basic processing including Exposure, Shadows, Highlights, Black and White Points, White Balance, and Colour Corrections in Lightroom. But, if I'm sending the image to a Topaz product, I don't use Lightroom for Contrast, Texture, Clarity or Dehaze; and I reset Sharpening and Noise Reduction back to "0", except I leave Colour Noise Reduction at 25 as Lightroom does an excellent job of that.

The Topaz programs can be used as stand-alone programs, or as plug-ins. To send an image to one of the Topaz programs from Lightroom, right click on the image and then "Edit In" and choose the Topaz program that is appropriate to enhance the image. Make sure that you choose "Edit a Copy with Lightroom adjustments, and then click "Edit".

In Photoshop, go to Filter, chose Topaz Labs and then choose the appropriate Topaz product These setting will ensure the image is returned to Lightroom or Photoshop with all your basic changes intact, plus the Topaz adjustments.

"Original Image at 500%"

I use a suite of three Topaz plug-ins: DeNoiseAI, SharpenAI, and GigapixelAI, and occasionally Studio 2. To illustrate, I will use an image of a heron I recently shot handheld at Esquimalt Lagoon on a very windy day. This raw image was shot with my Nikon D850 at 500 mm, f8, 1/8000th, ISO 3200, and imported into Lightroom. The original size was 8256 x 5504 pixels, or 45.4 mp. I used this high ISO to achieve a high shutter speed to compensate for the wind, and also to illustrate just how well Topaz works. The image has significant noise and is a little soft. I have cropped it to 500% (down to 9.3 mp) to show the noise and softness.

DeNoiseAI is one of the premier noise reduction tools currently available. Even with the latest cameras, if you shoot above ISO 1000 or in low light, your images could have noticeable noise. Lightroom does have Luminance Noise Reduction, but I find it tends to soften a noisy image whereas DeNoiseAI does not. DeNoise will eliminate severe noise and recover crisp detail. Denoise does have a sharpen slider but SharpenAI works better for sharpening.

After doing basic adjustments in Lightroom, I sent the heron image to DeNoiseAI. You have the choice of four Views: Single (to fill the frame), Split View (slider for Before & After), Side-by-Side View (original and chosen mode), or Comparison View (four windows showing each mode). I generally use Comparison View to choose the mode that I think does the best job of removing any noise.

"Denoise Image at 500%"

There are four AI modes: Standard, Clear, Low Light, or Severe Noise, or Auto where the program will choose the mode for you once it analyses the image. In this image; the Severe Noise mode removed the background noise very well. You can manually increase or decrease the amount of noise reduction or sharpness with the sliders. You can also limit the area of the image to be adjusted by use of the built-in mask. Once you are happy with the image, click Apply and it will be sent back to Lightroom or Photoshop. If the image only needs noise reduction,

then the balance of adjustments can be done in Lightroom or Photoshop.

SharpenAI is very useful to recover from minor missed focus, lens softness or motion blur. It sharpens images with minimal artifacts. It does a great job on images of building lines. It does have a denoise slider, but DeNoise works better for noise reduction.

"Sharpen Image at 500%"

The heron image was still a little soft, so I sent it (after the basic Lightroom and DeNoise adjustments) to SharpenAI. This has the same four screen choices in View, as well as an Auto setting for both Sharpen Model and Model Parameters. You can use Auto or select from these modes: Motion Blur, Out of Focus or Too Soft. Each mode also has three sub-categories. Model Parameters has two sub-categories to manually adjust Blur or Noise via sliders.

Like DeNoiseAI, there is a mask function to limit the area of an image to be sharpened. For the heron image, I chose Too Soft - Normal that brought out details in the feathers. Once you are happy with the image, click Apply and it will be sent back to Lightroom or Photoshop for final adjustments and cropping.

GigapixelAI is basically a "resizing" program (similar to, but much more effective and flexible than "Enhance" in Lightroom) that is very useful for upscaling extreme crops for printing or for restoring low-resolution images. It will upscale your image to as much as 600% while preserving image quality. It has Noise and Blur settings but these functions are better done by either DeNoiseAI or SharpenAI.

At this point in my workflow, I will crop the image and perform any final adjustments I think are necessary in Lightroom or Photoshop before upscaling it. If I plan to print this image any larger than 8x10", I will send it to GigapixelAI to up-size it to the size of the print that I am making. The layout of GigapixelAI is very similar to DeNoiseAI and SharpenAI, with four Views, five AI Models (modes: Standard, Lines, Art and CG, Low Resolution and Very Compressed, and Resize). You can set the resizing ratio you want to use as well as noise and blur settings with sliders. I chose Resize and Low Resolution to get this image back to 11x17". And now it is ready for printing.

If you would like to have a little fun with an image Topaz Studio 2 is a post-processing program that gives you an amazing choice of filters to convert your image to a creative artwork. It also has masking and non-destructive layers to allow you to further enhance your creativity. The heron image was processed in Studio 2 using the Abstract Flux filter.

"Abstract Heron"

Summary: I always shoot in raw. If an image is noisy or blurred then I do my basic adjustments in Lightroom and then send it to DeNoise AI and back to Lightroom. If the image is blurry or soft I send it to Sharpen AI then back to Lightroom for final adjustments and cropping. If the image is severely cropped and I plan to print it then I will send it to GigapixelAI to up-size the cropped image to the print size.

If I had to choose only one of these Topaz programs, it would be DeNoiseAI and I would use Clear and/or Standard mode most of the time but the other two modes are there for comparison. Finer adjustments can be made with the sliders or the use of the built-in mask tool.

These programs are not free. DeNoiseAI and SharpenAI are US$ 80 each and GigapixelAI is $US100 but often the bundle of all three is offered at $US160 so, if you are buying two, you might as well get all three for the same price. Studio 2 is $US100. They include unlimited upgrades for one year. Also, each program has a free trial version available so you can decide for yourself. Details are at: *topazlabs.com*.

# Beginner's Corner: Making a Better Image

by Joseph Finkleman

When you are just starting out, slowing down is the best advice to follow. Putting your camera on a tripod helps in two different ways. Firstly, it radically eliminates camera motion. Even the least expensive lens will look very sharp if you use the optimal aperture, either f4 or f5.6 and affix your camera to a tripod. Plus, by its nature, a tripod will slow you down.

Slowing down means you will have time to think about the image. In composing use leading lines. Introduce a certain amount of asymmetry in the composition and most importantly use crossing light.

Properly expose because underexposure is the biggest cause of noise. A properly exposed image at ISO 6400 is very usable with the tiniest amount of noise reduction. Crossing light will define planes and contribute to a three-dimensional effect. Back light can be dramatic but careful shadow exposure is key here.

For landscapes only use a wide-angle lens with a near-far subject relationship in the image. Wide-angle lenses make grand vistas look odd. You are much better off using a normal lens and doing a three- or five-frame stitched image rather than using a wide-angle lens. Remember landscapes were done for a century with a normal or slightly long lens. f16 is not a sharp aperture, use it only when you need a lot of depth-of field.
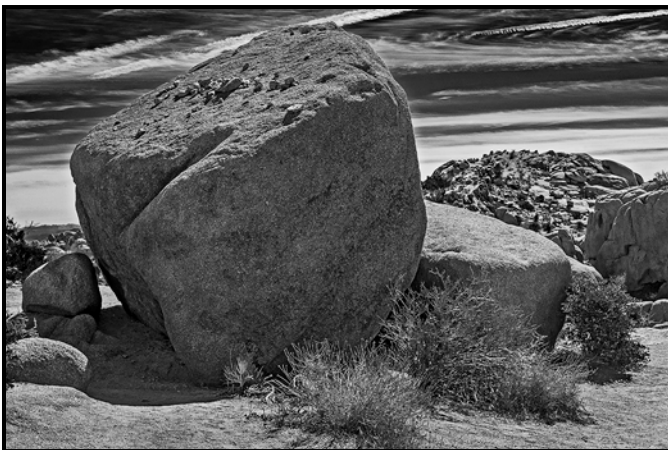
"Wide-angle, Near-far Subject Relationship"

If you are taking pictures of people and if they are candid, forget the tripod but do try to get a fast shutter speed. You are better off using a higher ISO than a slower shutter speed. A shutter speed of 1/250th-1/1000th second is best for candid work.

It is important to remember to separate the person from the background and have nothing odd growing out of their head. You need enough depth-of-field so that a person's nose does not go wildly out of focus while at the same time you want to get the background blurry. A wider aperture of f4 is best for lenses of 50 mm or longer while for shorter lenses f2-f2.8 is best.

If you can control the candid shot and it is outside, back-light with the sun and use a fill flash. If it is indoors, use your flash as a bounce light. I usually set my ISO to 6400 and bounce light off of the ceiling when working with a long lens or I use the flash's swivel-head and bounce the light off of a wall.

"Parya"

If you are shooting a portrait then always work 2-4 metres from your subject. For a head and shoulders shot that means you will be working with a lens that is twice the focal length of a normal lens. For a full figure shot the lens you will need is a normal lens.

With portraits where people are actually posing you can use a shallower depth-of-field. For lenses shorter than 30 mm that would mean an aperture of f1.4-f2. For lenses between 30 mm-60 mm use f2-f2.8. With lenses from 60 mm to 135 mm use an aperture of f2.8 to f5.6.

I can never emphasize enough the need to think of each and every image as if it were to be a black and white image. Tonal values do all of the work while colour gets all of the credit.

I would recommend shooting a bit loosely so that you have plenty of crop room. I would also recommend shooting the same image from at least three different points of view. I would stay away from ultra-fast lenses as a general rule.