



Close-Up

VictoriaCameraClub.ca

**Photoshop's Enhanced Subject
and Object Selection
My Creative Vision
Image Review Workshop
More About Salons and Competitions
Portfolio: Normand Marcotte
Portfolio: Monica Reekie
2020 Frank Turner Award: Richard Webber
Photoshop Colour Grading Tips
Shoots Around Victoria
Focus Stacking
Beginner's Corner: Camera Menu Set-Up**

"The Majesty of the Schreckhorn" by Richard Webber

Victoria Camera Club

October 2020 Volume 73 Number 7

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Victoria Camera Club



"Costa's Hummingbird" by Don Piper

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

Events

We hold a number of events including:

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

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

Membership

Annual fees include all workshops (except studio shoots and special events), meetings and all field trips unless travel/accommodation is involved. Annual fees: Individual, \$70; Family, \$107; Student, \$36 (until Dec 31, 2020).

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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2018, 2019 and 2020

CAPA Award-winning Newsletter 2015

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October 2020

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The Victoria Camera Club is a member society of the Victoria Arts Council, Canadian Association for Photographic Arts (CAPA), and the Photographic Society of America (PSA).



VICTORIA ARTS COUNCIL



Calendar

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

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

October 1st: Competition Night. September competitions results, The Theme for October is “Arches, Alleyways, Laneways”.

October 8th: Presentation Night. Bird Photography Simplified, My Approach to Creating Images presented by Glen Bartley.

October 15th: Members’ Night. Presentations of members’ images, field trip slide shows, prints or short technical presentations.

Workshop Highlights: Street Photography, Landscape Photography.

Field Trip Highlights: Butchart Gardens, Tofino “Rainforest, Bears and Winter Storms” weekend.

Cover Image: “The Majesty of the Schreckhorn” by Richard Webber. In September 2019 my wife and I, along with our son and daughter did a fantastic hiking tour for ten days in Switzerland. The highlight of our adventure was undertaking the hike from Schynige Platte to Faulhorn to First in the Bernese Oberland. The hike is 16 kilometres over very rugged mountainous terrain and takes about six hours to complete. The highest point of our hike was the Faulhorn, 2680 meters in elevation. It seemed daunting to reach the top of that peak but with lunch and a beer or two at the mountain hut it was well worth it.

This view of the Schreckhorn was taken towards the end of our hike. It is the highest peak located in the Canton of Berne rising above 4000 meters. In the foreground is Bachsee, a beautiful alpine lake situated above the town of Grindelwald. An easier way to approach this lake is to take the gondola from Grindelwald and from there it’s only a one hour hike.

On this trip, I thought I would be a little smarter and travel light with respect to my photography equipment. I captured this image with my Sony A6000 and my 18-135 mm lens, taken at f11 at 1/60th of a second, ISO 320. Image processed in Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop.

President’s Message

This month I would like to start my message with some well-deserved congratulations. Each year the *Close-Up* team selects one issue from the past year to enter in the Photographic Society of America (PSA) Newsletter competition. This year the team selected the May-July 2020 issue. I am happy to say that for the third year in a row *Close-Up* placed first in the Large Club Category! Not only that, we also received awards for Best Variety of Content and Best How-To article. Many thanks to our Editor Richard James, the production team and the more than fifty authors who contributed throughout the year to produce our award-winning magazine!

I also want to welcome all of our newest members and give a warm welcome back to our current members for another great year with the Victoria Camera Club. Our Club is about learning, advancing our photography skills and having fun! We look forward to ‘seeing’ you all at our many events this coming year, whether it is during a monthly presentation, a workshop or a field trip.

At the beginning of each year I like to talk about the importance of volunteering in our Club. We have a large membership and our members have diverse knowledge and skill levels. We are proud of the many programs that we provide for our members annually. All of these programs are put together and run by volunteers who contribute their time and expertise to help others. Volunteering can also be a good way for a new member to meet other members. If you are interested in joining a team, please email me president@victoriacameraclub.ca or any member of the committee that interests you. Their email address can be found under the About Us tab on the website.

The past six months have seen quite an adjustment for all of us. With the current restrictions in place due to the pandemic our Club has moved to a Zoom meeting format until such time that it is safe for us to get together in person again. I would like to personally thank Richard Letourneau, Kim Smith and their team for putting everything into place and training Club members in Zoom’s use allowing us to move online all that the Club has to offer. I would also like to say thanks again to all our volunteers who have been working hard during this transition and to all members who continue to be patient while we adjust to our new normal.

In the words of Dr. Bonnie Henry, “Be kind, be calm and be safe”.

Teri VanWell, President

Photoshop's Enhanced Subject and Object Selection

by Kirk Schwartz

Selecting and Masking are perhaps the most essential, but most daunting, tools in Photoshop. Still, they are absolutely necessary for compositing and for many photo manipulations.

Photoshop 2020 now has an enhanced Subject and Object Selection Tool with AI. The tool is not perfect or magic. Depending on the image, you are going to have to spend time refining the selection, and it may take quite a bit of time, depending on the photo you are working on.

When you access the auto-selection tools on the sidebar you will see a new tool, "Object Selection". The "Quick Selection" and the "Magic Wand" tools are functionally unchanged, but notice that in the top menu there are "Select Subject" and "Select and Mask" rectangles. These options operate the same way in all three auto-select tools. Adobe's "Sensi AI" attempts to select the main subject(s) in the photo. With the "Object Select" tool you may add or subtract portions of the selection by pressing "shift" while dragging a box to add or pressing "alt" or "option" while dragging to subtract. Adobe AI attempts to identify the new boundaries. Beware. If you simply draw a box around a new area to add, it makes a new selection and deletes your previous selection. That is because you have invoked the "Object Selection" option.

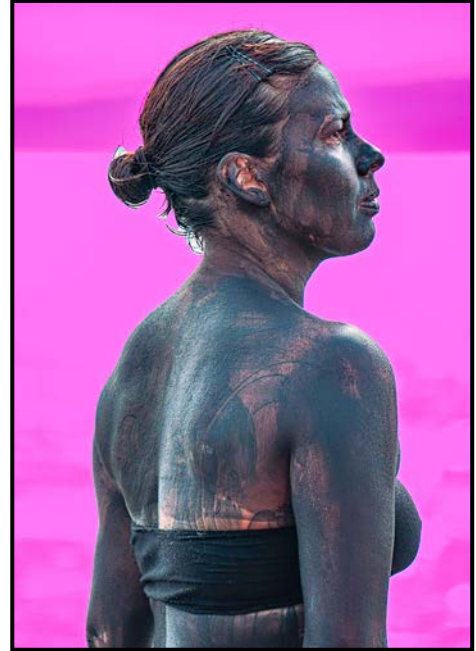
"Object Selection" allows you to choose a specific area and have Sensi AI identify the edges and boundaries. For example, if you select only a person's face in this manner AI ignores the body and clothing. If you choose the "Select and Mask" option it takes you into the selection properties window. You can do all of the above procedures and, in addition, you have access to the selection refining tools. Finally, after you have created the mask, you may still have to use the brush tool on your mask to get the best selection.

These two tutorials can guide you through the process. The first, from "PIXimperfect", will get you started: youtu.be/85mbfhQzw1I. The second, from "Phlearn" will give you a better idea of the difficulties: youtu.be/0rE6PsDH-pi8. Adobe's help file is at: helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/making-quick-selections.html.

When selecting a photo look for a well-lit image. Keep in mind contrast, background separation and edge definition. Beware of defocused, low contrast or blurred areas that will require more effort and manual refinements.

October 2020

When shooting, be aware of the lighting and background. A simple background is preferred. A rim light will help create edge definition. Fill light on shadow areas will help the selection. When compositing it is very important to match the direction of the key lights in each image.



"Simple Image"

In "Simple Image", Lindsay Delearonde is in performance mode on the Dallas Road beach. Sunlight bouncing from the concrete seawall provides fill light.



"Difficult Image"

In "Difficult Image", taken at a Bashirah Middle Eastern Dance recital at Langham Court Theatre, the key light provides strong contrast but shadow areas fade into the background.

My Creative Vision

by Jackye Mills

I was blessed to grow up in an art-loving, creative family on Saltspring Island where life was quieter and simpler, long before the famous people began moving there. Even then the community was a very strong arts community with summer painting camps and workshops, many of which my father arranged so there was always a place for me in the adult sessions. I loved to paint with them and learned from them all, students and teachers alike. I was always encouraged with all the art supplies and praise a young girl could want so I loved the summers and knew, as a child, that I would be some type of artist.

I am not a photographer in the traditional sense. Other than family shots (which I love, and they hate) I mostly take photos as a means to an end. I was a watercolour painter and clothing designer for many years, and, with a camera handy took thousands of photos over those years to use as visual reminders of locations, clothing designs, lighting and compositions. My photo library was my source of inspiration for the creation of paintings or silk banners.

Since I retired, I still take lots of photos and when I shoot I still “see paintings” so, now, they are the base for further exploration in my digital darkroom. We have been fortunate to be able to do a lot of travelling over the years and I have accumulated many more photos including wildlife and architecture as favourites. I love trying to capture the feeling and essence in a city or the personality of a snarling lion or the shyness of a leopard. So many things to be inspired by! When I feel an emotional connection with a place or photo I’ve taken, then I can’t wait to get on the computer and experiment

with it and try to build a painting. I like to try to document my journeys more as an artist than as a photographer.

“Naples Dome” was created in Photoshop with masks and splatter brushes.

I have lost much of the dexterity and flexibility in my hands; which is not good for a painter! Using a computer, the control-z and delete functions have become my best friends and are a lot less messy than trying to resurrect a watercolour painting, a process which is very unforgiving! I feel so lucky to have a new medium to learn as my abilities have changed and I’m always in my happy place when watching a webinar and learning new techniques or being creative in some form. There are endless possibilities using Photoshop and various plug-ins and I feel very fortunate to have access to so much free information, ideas and help with the Internet, my Facebook groups and YouTube videos.



“Bruges”

In “Bruges” I increased the saturation in Photoshop, removed details with Topaz Simplify, decreased opacity in some areas and painted over with watercolour brushes.

I always shoot in RAW, do most processing in Photoshop and use various plug-in filters. I was late to the party with Lightroom and occasionally do some initial editing there but am most comfortable with the Camera RAW editing in Photoshop. My workflow is not one I would recommend as it’s certainly not proper Photoshop protocol but it’s how I taught myself and old habits are hard to break. I use a lot of layers for different effects but will often flatten the layers, add another and continue on for no reason other than that’s what I do; not so good when you want to recreate how you arrived there.

I begin editing in Camera Raw or Lightroom and adjust until I’m happy with the exposure, colours and contrast, keeping in mind that I may have decided to change the sky or use a texture or two to soften or blur parts of the



“Naples Dome”

image. I often use a number of different plug-ins when creating a painted image, usually ON1 software first for adding light and dynamic contrast filters and then finishing with a more painterly look in Topaz Studio. There are many different “looks” or pre-sets in Topaz which you can add to an image, or it’s easy to paint and control your own with the “Impression” filter that has numerous sliders for brush types, opacity, stroke size, etc.

I use a separate layer when exporting an image to Topaz and will often use layer masks after returning to Photoshop. Painting out areas with low opacity brushes gives me the flexibility to make a centre of interest sharper or a background more painterly. I often use the Topaz Simplify filter to make a background less detailed. I will often just use a combination of Photoshop brushes and masks in an image but most frequently move on to adding other bits from the plug-ins or textures. Lately I’ve had fun experimenting with stacking multiple images with slight movement, either in-camera or in Photoshop.



“Venice Gondolas”

“Venice Gondolas” is a single image converted to black and white then duplicated five times and stacked with slight movement vertically between each copy.

I take a lot of photographs to use as my backgrounds or textures and now have a large library of abstract things and skies, perfect for creating digital art. As well as wildlife and landscape photos, I take a lot of photos of my grand-daughters. They aren’t too good at posing for me as they are still little tikes and they run when they see the big black nose coming out of the bag. Frequently I feel compelled to move them around in the digital darkroom or add my own props to create the composition and painting I had visualized. I have become more accomplished at changing out a wiggling baby, fixing a frowny face or adding myself to the family photo when we don’t have a tripod handy, essential skills in family photography!

October 2020



“A Stroll through Playfair Park”

After basic editing in Adobe Camera RAW, I finished “A Stroll Through Playfair Park” with more moody adjustments in ON1 and Topaz Impression.

My most recent project has been making a series of children’s books for my grandchildren that are all about my friend Henrietta. Henrietta is a hummingbird who lives in our yard and hates being left behind for the winter when we travel. She hides in my backpack and travels with us, learning about different cultures and wildlife wherever we go. It’s been great fun doing composite images of Henrietta chatting with lions and bears or flying over the Great Wall of China.

I’m fortunate to have a big collection of images to work with, as I’m not sure that Henrietta will be flying away anytime soon! It’s been a great project to have in these “stay at home” times as I’ve learned a lot in creating the images, enjoying being an artist and I think a little whimsy is good for these tough times.

This is a composite image with basic Camera Raw processing and Topaz Impression adjustments.



“Henrietta meets Mr. Koala”

Image Review Workshop

by Jim Fowler

In the past the Workshop Committee has run both novice and intermediate image review workshops. Those workshops have been so popular that the Club is expanding them to cover members at all levels. So, you should check the calendar for future dates.

What happens at an image review workshop? Members who wish to participate submit two or three images before the workshop begins. The host will introduce the panel of three commentators to the participants. After introductions, the host will display the first photo. Taking turns, one commentator will then lead off the discussion, noting the strengths and weaknesses of the photo. After the first commentator, the other two add their comments. Participating members, particularly the one whose photo is the current subject, are encouraged to comment or question. Lively discussions can, and do, break out. Since photo judging is subjective, it is not unusual for the commentators to have divergent views. When all have said what they want, the host moves on to the next photo. The whole process proceeds in this way until either all of the photos have been reviewed or the time allotted expires.

What possible benefit might you gain from participating? Firstly, no one will attack or ridicule you. The commentators themselves are all competing members and have personally taken the risk of exposing their own work to comment so they know what that is like. Unlike competition night, where you have to wait for a month, with no chance of asking questions or explaining your choices, this is a chance for you to participate in an immediate discussion in real time about your photo. Yes, the others see it, but that too is part of the benefit. If you have competed at all, you will have learned two things: photographic judging is not a precise science and we can be blinded by our attraction to our own photographs. It is not unlike falling in love, we see something that catches our attention and the more we look, the more we like what we see, sometimes to the exclusion of all realistic assessment.

Some members have submitted photos for review because they have a question and need an opinion. Some members may observe a session first without submitting their own images. In most cases, those who have done that soon take the plunge and submit their images the next time. I have observed that many workshop participants soon become more active in competitions. Is that a coincidence? I think not. Learning to submit your

images for review by others is part of growing in photographic maturity.

In a recent conversation with a fellow member who, I thought, had improved immensely over the past year (and whose competition results proved it) I asked her if there was one course or workshop to which she attributed her improvement. I happened to know that she had attended some very high-profile workshops outside of the Club. I expected her to name one of those but to my surprise, she said she thought the image reviews were the biggest reason for her improvement! It was the chance to discuss her photos and to hear the views of a more experienced photographer discussing an issue in her photo. To her, that was invaluable. As a direct result of her experiences at the image review, she said she had become much more consistent at examining the whole frame and much less inclined to just see only what attracted her. Perhaps it is like maturing in general, from puppy infatuation with visions of beauty we progress to more mature and realistic relationships with our images.

In addition to the opportunity for an in-depth discussion of your work, are there other benefits to attending an image review workshop? Yes, there are. You get the benefit of seeing images you might never have had the inclination to attempt, with the opportunity to ask the photographer any question you want. Isn't it just the experience you hoped for when you joined the Club in the first place? You get the pleasure of spending time learning about photography in a friendly setting among a group of people with the same interests as you!

Another benefit of attending an image review workshop is that you will have the chance to get to know some of the interesting and generous members who volunteer their time to help you improve your photography. Commentators are chosen from experienced members who (in most cases) have received the CAPA judging training or have distinguished themselves in competition, or both. Some have extensive judging experience. Constructive commentary is the goal and it is (in my experience) the reality, too.

The other change this year will be that the meetings will be held via Zoom instead of in a classroom. You can sit in the comfort of your own home, maybe with a beverage of your choice, and enjoy an engrossing and inspiring evening of photography. Many members have made improvements suggested at a review and have gone on to submit their photos into competition, and frequently, a photo appears that is so good that the commentators encourage the member to submit it into competition. You never know until you try.

More About Salons and Competitions

by Richard James

The Photographic Society of America (PSA) is an organization recognized around the world as representing camera clubs and individual photographers. The Canadian equivalent is the Canadian Association for Photographic Art (CAPA). PSA membership is comprised of members from more than 80 countries. Both CAPA and PSA are members of FIAP (Fédération Internationale de l'Art Photographique), the international association for national photographic organizations.

CAPA, PSA and FIAP organize or accredit photographic competitions and salons. These are generally organized into subject categories or divisions defined by the sponsoring organization. A Salon is a juried show where images are either accepted or declined by a jury. This is often based on a quota. It is an achievement to have an image selected and top images receive honour awards. Competitions are events where all submitted images are scored by a panel of judges and honours are awarded to the top scorers.

VCC is a member club of both CAPA and PSA and some members are also individual members of these organizations. VCC members are encouraged to enter CAPA and PSA recognized salons and competitions.

CAPA and FIAP have similar definitions. Note that VCC uses somewhat modified definitions. The PSA Divisions are described below (please see psa-photo.org/index.php?division-definitions for complete definitions.)

Projected Image: Includes all subject matter (Open) or may be a restricted theme (as defined by the exhibition). Images may be colour or monochrome in separate classes. Monochrome includes greyscale images that have been uniformly toned with a single colour. Partial toning, multi toning or the inclusion of spot colouring does not meet the definition of monochrome.

Nature: Includes all branches of natural history, except anthropology and archaeology, such that a well-informed person will be able to identify the subject material and its honest presentation. Human-created elements are not acceptable (with limited exceptions adapted to the human environment). Landscapes, geological formations and weather phenomena are acceptable. Domestic and feral animals, hybrid and cultivated plants etc. are not permitted. Adding, deleting or changing elements is prohibited. "Normal" photographic processing is acceptable. HDR and focus stacking are acceptable but panoramas

and infra-red images are not. Colour or untuned monochrome images are permitted. Subjects in controlled conditions such as zoos, game farms, botanical gardens, aquariums, etc. are acceptable. The story telling value of a photograph must be weighed more than the pictorial quality while maintaining high technical quality.

Nature - Wildlife: All the above conditions apply except that landscapes, geological formations, weather phenomena, captive or domestic animals, birds etc. are not permitted. The subject must be extant zoological or botanical organisms (includes insects, fungi, and algae) free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat.

Photojournalism: Includes images with informative content and emotional impact, reflecting the human presence in our world. The storytelling value of the image shall receive priority over pictorial quality. Images from events or activities arranged for photography or of subjects directed or hired for photography, are not eligible. Techniques that add, relocate, replace, or remove any element of the original image are not permitted.

Photo Travel: Includes images showing the characteristic features or culture of a land. Images from events or activities arranged for photography or of subjects directed or hired for photography are not permitted. Pictures of people or objects must include information about the location. Techniques that add, relocate, replace, or remove any element of the original image are not permitted.

Pictorial Prints: Prints may be in colour or monochrome. Digital, film, desktop and darkroom processing, and commercial prints are acceptable. The content or subject matter of an image is unrestricted. There may be a theme specified (as defined by the exhibition). Prints are in four classes, large/small colour, and large/small monochrome.

Details of CAPA, and PSA, recognized events are on their websites. CAPA events at: capacanada.ca/capa-competitions. PSA-recognised salons at: psa-photo.org/index.php?exhibitions-current-exhibition-list and competitions at: psa-photo.org/index.php?psa-competition-dates.

PSA offers activities related to photographic genres that are more extensive than our own competitions. The participation in these is international giving you exposure to image styles from other parts of the world.

In addition, PSA offers a large number of other services through its divisions as well as global services to members. You can find out more about these here: psa-photo.org. A brief list includes: recorded and live workshops, study groups and image evaluation services, travel advisory services and more.

November Theme: Still Life

by Pam Irvine

A still life is a work of art that focuses on inanimate subjects. When creating a still life photograph you need to find ways to make your subject interesting. By experimenting with arrangements, lighting, and compositions, photographers can breathe life into their subjects.

You're probably familiar with still life in art, those images that depict a bowl of fruit or flowers in a vase. Still life can include both man-made objects such as vases, items of clothing, and consumer products and natural objects like plants, food, rocks, and shells.

Plan your photo: Try picking out an object that you find interesting and build the scene around it. Keep in mind the concepts of good design and composition. Pay attention to the arrangement of the items, the lighting, and the framing. Once you understand how to create good still life photography you will be well equipped to create better photo compositions in any situation.

Elements of design: These include diagonal lines (dynamic), the primary shapes (triangle, square and circle), colour (complementary or harmonious) and the rule of odds (three rather than two objects). You can also try out different proportional relations between objects. Pay attention to the space around your subject, the negative space. The composition of your photo may become better just by increasing (or decreasing) the negative space.

Lighting: Good lighting is essential. With natural light figure out the best time for a shoot or wait until the light has improved. You don't have to use fancy lights; desk and bedroom lamps are fine. If you do not do post-processing, remember to set the white balance on your camera to match the light source (incandescent or fluorescent for most lights except LEDs)

Background: Make sure that the background works well with your main subject. Think about how the background will look in-focus and out-of-focus (deep or shallow depth-of-field). Find a background with an interesting texture or no texture at all. Try using sheets, blankets, wrapping paper or tissue paper. It might be harder to control the shooting environment outside but you may find unique subjects and backgrounds there.

Still Life is the theme for November 2020 so get out your tripod and play around with ideas and the contents in your cupboards! The world is your oyster (Oh, oysters would make a good still life).

Club Competitions

by Jill Turyk and Leah Gray

If you are looking for a way to improve the quality of your photography, competitions are a terrific way to do so. With each competition comes the chance to receive feedback on your own images, as well as the opportunity to read the feedback on others' images. It is a great experience to put your work forward and have it critiqued and it pushes you to do your best work. Having a deadline for your images to be competition-ready helps to get you out shooting. The variety of available competition categories and monthly themes (up to 8) gives you a place to start when deciding on your shoot.

I have found competing gratifying and fun and it has improved the quality of my photography. It is always good to learn how to improve your skills and to be acknowledged for your work. Club comp images and prints are due the first Thursday in each month (September, October, November, January, February and March). Results are shown the first Thursday of the next month.

The objective of the External Competition committee is to raise the Club's profile and gauge our progress in developing our member's skills compared to other clubs. We wish to actively encourage members to compete and have their work evaluated against other photographers.

This year we will also be providing members with scores for images entered in external competitions. You will be able to see your own score in your VCC library.

The Club will enter six external competitions in October: three Nature comps plus PSA Creative, PSA Open and CAPA Open. For PSA Creative the image may be of any subject matter and must obviously display a change in natural colour, form, shape or any combination of these three. All images must be original and may not incorporate elements produced by anyone else. PSA and CAPA Open means just that: open, anything goes. All components of the image must have been taken by the entrant. Feel free to edit to your heart's delight. Please see the website for full competition definitions. There is a direct link for each competition from the Competition Summary page (under the Competitions tab). All images should be 1400 x 1050 pixels this year.

To provide members with feedback on their images the committee will be holding Image Reviews as VCC Workshops next year. This will not be tied to competition image selection in any way. For more details, please visit the VCC website.

CONTINUING STUDIES@UVIC



Fall 2020 Photography and Visual Arts Courses

We are pleased to offer the following online, live and interactive visual arts courses this fall (details available on our website):

- [Cashing in on Your Photography](#)
- [Introduction to Portrait Drawing with Graphite](#)

We are also offering a limited number of face-to-face visual arts courses with small maximum numbers.

Visit continuingstudies.uvic.ca/visual for more information.

Planning is currently underway for our winter and spring community courses. Join thousands of learners on our email list and you'll be one of the first to be notified when registration opens.

Join today!

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Portfolio: Normand Marcotte

I started in photography as a teenager when, in 1975, I finally managed to buy my first camera, a Konica Autoreflex T. It was followed in the next three decades by a few more film cameras until my Canon ELAN broke. Instead of paying for the repair of an “old” film camera I decided that it was time to join the digital world! So, in 2006, I purchased a digital Canon 30D and upgraded to a full-frame Canon 6D in 2013 (which I still use). In 2019, I also acquired a Fuji X-T30 with the 18-55 mm kit lens, a compact APS-C mirrorless camera ideal for “walkabouts” when I want to keep the camera bag light. I use the X-T30 as a back-up when I travel.

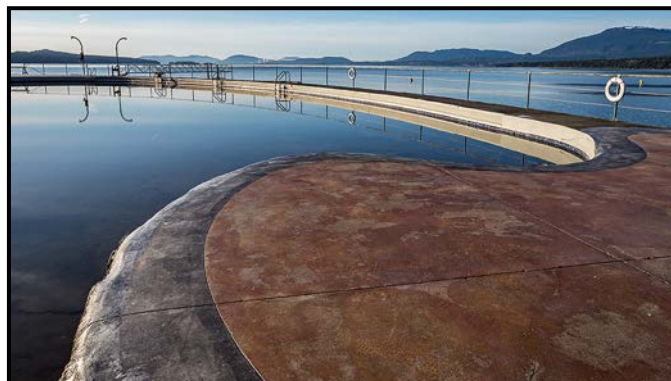


“Reflection in Montreal, 1987”

Sometime in the mid-1980s I took an introduction to Photography course in Montreal that had a darkroom processing component. I was hooked and soon purchased a black & white darkroom set-up and started to process my films and print at home.

We moved to Victoria in 1997 and I joined the Victoria Camera Club soon after picking up a copy of *Close-Up* in Lens & Shutter at their original location on Fort Street. I liked the Club activities from the start but it took me a few years to gather up enough courage to submit images to the competitions (slides and prints only in those days). At that time the Club had fewer members and the competitions were not divided into the novice, intermediate and advance categories.

I have always been more interested in graphic images, architectural subjects, street and urban landscape photo-



“The Pool’s Edge”

graphy. In the last few years I also became interested in long-exposure photography. My digital post-processing started with Paintshop Pro and I eventually migrated to Lightroom 3 in 2013 and added Photoshop Elements 14 in about 2016. In 2019, I finally opted for the Adobe Photography Plan subscription model that gives me access to the latest Lightroom Classic and Photoshop 2020 programs. I also use the DxO NIK Collection 3, especially the Sliver Efex Pro and HDR Efex Pro components. I have always been interested in black and white photography as it highlights the graphic elements and the texture of the content of an image without being distracted by colour.

“Palm Tree” was shot in Santa Barbara, CA on an overcast day. Walking along a boulevard I noticed this tall palm tree in the distance seemingly centered on a gap between two concrete overpasses. I thought it would make a nice vertical black and white image with a white sky and dark black shadows. The scene needed a bit of scale so I waited for a pedestrian to walk along the



“Palm Tree”

opposite sidewalk and appear in the space between the two columns in the background. I cropped to limit the amount of white sky and I converted the image to black and white in Lightroom.



"Mission Hill Vineyard"

In "Mission Hill Vineyard" I wanted a strong architectural graphic image. I thought the building in the vineyard would give me an interesting mix of hard crisp textured concrete and long sweeping curved lines for a vertical composition. Converting the image to black and white in Lightroom, I turned the blue sky a deep black to increase the contrast of the scene.



"Peekaboo"

"Peekaboo" was taken at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. I was on the balcony of one of the buildings and I noticed another tourist looking down from a higher balcony. I quickly raised my camera to capture this image with a wide-angle lens. I took the shot rather than risk losing the moment by taking the time to change lenses. The final image represents less than 20% of the original horizontal image, a lot of unnecessary information was simply cropped out to create a more graphic and dramatic black and white image. I converted the image to black and white in DxO NIK Silver Efex.

Creative photography is definitely near the top of my interests. For years I wanted to do more in that area but was just lacking the Photoshop skills to create interesting composites. A couple of years ago I decided to dedicate more time and effort to learn this intimidating software so, I started going to workshops, watching YouTube tutorials, and joined the Club's Creative SIG.

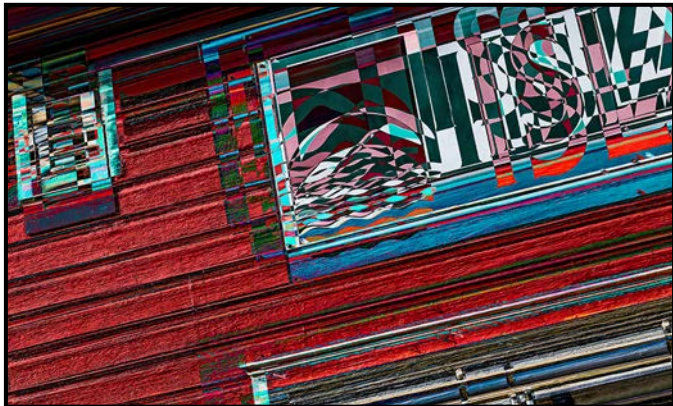
In the last few years I have attended two seven-day workshops that have had a huge impact on my creative photography. In 2016 I went on my first workshop: "Develop Your Creative Vision" in Bella Coola on the coast of British Columbia, and in 2019 I attended "Develop Your Creative Vision, Part II" in Barkerville, British Columbia.

Both workshops were run by the same team and had a similar format. Each day is filled with classes on creative photography, exercises, homework and image review. The first one is an introduction to the journey into new worlds of expressive art. The second is designed for those participants who attended the first workshops and who expressed a desire to go deeper with their photographic expression. These are different from guided tours where a photographer/leader takes the participants to locations without instruction.



"Sea Lion Memories"

One of the exercises was to practice telling a story by creating multiple-exposure images, the key being selecting related images, each image revealing part of a story and complementing each other. In “Sea Lion Memories”, an old abandoned life-ring, no longer in use is superimposed on the remnants of a derelict cannery building from the salmon fishing era when many canneries were active on the coast of British Columbia.



“Abstract Façade”

“Abstract Façade” is an example of abstract photography of a building façade in Barkerville. The technique is to slightly move the camera between consecutive images. You can shoot as many images as you want but four or five images achieve an “impressionist” style. You can blend the images in-camera or shooting individual images and blending in Photoshop (difference blend mode) to create the abstract effect desired.



“Tunnel Vision”

“Tunnel Vision” is another example of creative in-camera multiple exposure. This image is composed of four separate images taken at different focal lengths with a

24-105 mm zoom lens. To keep the same perspective for each shot the camera was set on a tripod and the focal length changed between shots. The subject was an old industrial cylinder lying on the ground, about one metre in diameter and six metres long. There were perforated steel plates at each end of the cylinder and one opening near the top of the cylinder. The camera was set up just outside the cylinder and looking through one of the circular openings. The different focal length created an interesting grid pattern of overlapping bright circles and repeated the circular opening at the top.



“I Wish I was a One-Man Band”

“I Wish I Was a One-Man Band” is a more recent creation. The original image was taken in Los Angeles in September 2018. The idea was to modify the pedestrian’s shadow to reflect his presumed dream to be a “one-man band”. The image was imported in Lightroom, processed and then converted to black and white in Silver Efex Pro. Photoshop was used to duplicate and warp the original shadow silhouette of the pedestrian on the ground and add the musical instrument.

The Victoria Camera Club has had a strong presence in my life ever since I arrived in Victoria in 1997. Thinking back to when I first started I can see an enormous improvement in my photography and it can be attributed in great measure, to my participation in the Club activities: competitions, field trips, workshops etc. I started slowly in competitions but I learned, practiced and eventually moved from the novice level to the advanced level. In particular, as soon as I retired, I started to attend the Tuesday morning field trips. Nothing like discussing photography over a cup of coffee and then practicing one’s skill in a beautiful city.

Portfolio: Monica Reekie

To mention “evolution” in the presence of my parents would have earned you a forceful “Go to your room!” I learned the truth in school. It is not only the planet and everything on it that has evolved over millennia, but we also change. Our beliefs, food preferences, hobbies, interests, friends, just about everything evolves and changes as we experience life.

I have always loved animals and felt more comfortable with them than with people. When I was a child the family dog was my best friend and confidante. My Dad had a Kodak Brownie camera and thankfully, I still have photos of all of my four-legged pals. My first camera was an inexpensive plastic model and, when it was fatally damaged, I bought disposable ones, capturing moments here and there until, after a few U-turns, ups and downs, and career changes, a move to Victoria refocused my interests. That life-change awakened something in me that was lying dormant as the challenges of life swept by.

Although I had travelled throughout Canada and the northern USA I became passionate about worldwide adventures after owning a B&B. Meeting people from around the globe piqued my curiosity. I became intent on visiting the places they told me about over long lingering breakfasts. Extensive travel through the British Isles, France, Scandinavia, the Baltics, Europe, Turkey, Egypt and the Mediterranean began with my Canon Power Shot T3i and within a year or two, a T4i and more lenses. There's something extraordinary about visiting a place you've only dreamed of, read about or seen on TV. As it unfolds in front of you, it's more beautiful than you'd imagined. The history, architecture, food and natural visions became my focus. I began to show and sell my work in Galleries and Fine Art Shows winning recognition and prizes.



“Les Jeunesse, Jardins Du Trocadero, Paris”

I was lining up a shot at the Jardins Du Trocadero, in Paris when, out of the corner of my eye, I spotted a child running toward the sculpture. He jumped in and became part of it. I got one shot before his mom pushed the stroller into the frame.

I had often heard the phrase “When one door closes, another opens” but I had no idea how much it would impact my life. As a former nurse, I heard many of my elderly clients say, “Don’t wait ‘until’ because it never comes.” When an opportunity comes along, take it and don’t look back. One year, money was tight and I was afraid that future travel would not be possible. My husband found a cruise in Europe that was affordable but I said, “No, something else was coming.” I thought of re-starting at the beginning of the alphabet as there were three places beginning with “A” that I wanted to visit. One morning, before going to work, I checked my emails and to my astonishment and extreme delight, there was one from National Geographic asking if I would like to go to the Galapagos with Lindblad Expeditions. I had my husband call them immediately to say YES! (I would have been late for work otherwise!) I bounced off the walls for days. I don’t know how I was chosen, but Galapagos has three A’s in it, so I took it as an answer to a prayer. Now I leave all of the windows and doors open in my wishes and dreams house.



“Giant and Grand”

At the place where Darwin’s “Theory of Evolution” was born, I had my “Road to Damascus” moment. My main focus for photography completely shifted from man-made history to nature and wildlife on my first day in that wondrous place of Endangered Species and Endangered Spaces. I had never imagined a world where wild creatures existed without fear of humans. Raw, powerful, shockingly beautiful scenery and wildlife brought mystery, magic and exceptional moments to my own personal discovery. The guides/naturalists were a wealth of information, passionate about the Galapagos, its protection and preservation. One guide led a few of us to the top of a mountain near the end of the day. We closed our eyes, felt the breeze, smelled the air, heard the sounds and became one with the place. The wild beauty and

serenity of that experience will stay with me forever. We descended from the rocky summit in twilight to a zodiac waiting to take us back to the expedition ship. Because we were so late, we said that we had been kidnapped by pirates, and our guide had negotiated our release.



"Comfortable"

We visited a plantation for the most wonderful feast. The owner greeted us with his Husky by his side. He said that some Canadians left Galapagos but couldn't take the dog with them, so he stayed. He noticed the Canadian flag on my camera strap. When I said I lived in Victoria, he smiled broadly saying that years earlier he had worked at Butchart Gardens and that it is his apple pie recipe that is used in the Blue Poppy Restaurant. I then told him that I was Mrs. Ross's private nurse until she passed. A connection was made. I knew that I had to return to that magical place so I planned, and led, a fundraising tour to benefit the Bateman Foundation the following year. I revisited the Galapagos gentleman's plantation with 76 participants, including the Batemans. Galapagos was just as magical the second time. It was here that I began capturing statement and conservation images. I always include some in gallery shows and exhibits.



"Pucker Up"

Then I wondered "What's next?" Quark Expeditions got in touch soon after I returned home. Svalbard? Why not? The sheer exhilaration of being above 80 degrees North,

just a few hundred miles south of the North Pole, on vast expanses of untouched nature, one of the last places on earth where very few people have been before you. We were the first expedition of the year, no footprints anywhere, except polar bears that walked past our gear on a beach as we explored.

One particular beach landing left an indelible image on my psyche. Thousands of whale bones and skulls extended the entire length of the water's edge, rearranged by winter's Arctic ice and powerful storms, near a ramshackle old whaling station. The evidence of the carnage was haunting. Most vistas were black and white, save for the stunning blues of the ice. Newly-calved icebergs made the sound of rice cereal in milk as we floated silently alongside in a zodiac. The stark beauty of the place was truly breathtaking. My little camera expired on this adventure so a Canon 70D was added to the arsenal. New lands being created by volcanoes, geology made more spectacular by relentless erosion of glaciers, make you feel as close as you'll ever get to another planet.



"Jester, on the Brink"

A retreat, again just-by-chance, to Yellowstone and the Grand Teton National Parks in Wyoming reinforced how popular wildlife art and photography are with 26 wildlife art galleries in Jackson offering inspiration.

One day at a lunch meeting, I heard about a small tour to Iceland with one space left. Done. I travelled all around the country, seeing vistas that changed around every turn, riding an Icelandic horse, hearing sagas and fables, tasting traditional foods, purchasing a real down pillow and surveying otherworldly landscapes.

For years, I have studied Robert Bateman's paintings that reflect wildlife in natural settings. I used to paint but my evolution to photography was made easier because he inspired me to look more closely at the natural world. Birgit Bateman is also a photographer and their mentorship has meant the world to me.



"Percolating Pink Paint Pots, Yellowstone NP"

One day, when I was working at the Bateman Foundation, a woman walked in. We started to chat and the conversation eventually led to Africa. She had organized a trip to Kenya with Zoo Keepers in the USA and saw the excitement on my face but, alas, the trip was full. We exchanged cards.



"Ever Vigilant"

Two weeks later, she emailed me that someone had dropped out. Would I like to go? I had dreamed of this since watching "Born Free" in 1966! I only had a couple of months to get ready but the one thing I had been preparing for, the biggest dream of my life, was about to come true. Instantly, upon exiting the small plane on a dirt runway, I found my soul at Lewa Downs, my Garden of Eden, indescribably peaceful, calm, and serene. The source of human evolution with seemingly endless vistas where truly wild animals abound. I had a goal of photographing my connections with wild animals and I was not disappointed. There were many spectacular wild encounters that I never thought possible.

My cameras, now including a Nikon P900, have given me a way of seeing the world and myself in a new light,

October 2020

appreciating everything around me. Don't ask me about shutter speed, ISO, lenses, I don't know about them. My primary reasons for travel are for the experiences and memories, secondary are the photography and the ability to share my images and stories when I return home. My intention is to "Give Back" to animal welfare organizations (BCSPCA, Wild ARC, Lewa Conservancy and Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, Kenya) through the sale of my images.



"Who Goes There?"

Nature needs no enhancement, so I don't do any content-editing in post-production. It is just as it was. I believe the role of the artist is to raise cultural, social, environmental and conservational consciousness. Capturing wildlife images to preserve their existence is my *raison d'être*.

"Les Jeunesse" was awarded "Best Photograph/Digital Media" image at the Sidney Fine Art Show in 2014 and for the VCC Eastwood competition in 2017. "Percolating Pink Paint Pots" received an Honourable Mention in the 2018 Sooke Fine Arts Show. All of the others have been accepted in Fine Art Shows in Sidney, Sooke and Victoria. Pieces similar to the three images from Kenya (this page) have been in various shows. "Comfortable" received an Honourable Mention and "Ever Vigilant" a second place in VCC Club competitions.

I wish to soar with eagles, dance with bears, walk with elephants, rest with lions and return to Kenya.

Best advice: Never delete images until you see them on a large screen.



"A Little Hope"

2020 Frank Turner Award: Richard Webber

The Frank Turner Award is the most prestigious award given by the Victoria Camera Club. The winners are accomplished photographers and volunteers who have made a significant contribution over the years.



“Finn Slough, IR Image”

The award was created in 1987 to honour Frank Turner, a long-time member of the Club. He was an accomplished photographer who won many awards for his art and was a vital member of the Club for many years. Members awarded this honour have every reason to be proud to receive an award in Frank’s famous name.

The selection of the winner is made by the last three winners. This year Mike Wooding (2016-17), Pam Irvine (2017-18) and Bobbie Carey (2018-19) made up the selection committee. The committee was unanimous in their choice of Richard Webber as this year’s winner.

Richard joined the Victoria Camera Club in 2010. He has volunteered for many positions over the years. As chair of the Competitions committee, Richard ably demonstrated the necessary characteristics of dedication and patience. He was a key contributor in producing the Competitions Guidelines document and is currently on the Novice Judging committee.

On competition nights, look for Richard’s beautiful black and white and infrared prints. He likes to experiment with infrared photography and had an old camera converted to record images in the infrared light range. He describes his photography as follows:

“My photographic artwork represents my personal perception of the landscape. I treat light as the subject, and I use the environment to demonstrate that light.



“Heavy Metal”

My work is often printed in monochrome as the elimination of colour forces the viewer to concentrate on the essential elements: light, form and texture. Content is not unimportant in my work because I am attracted to beautiful and noble subjects but, ultimately, the subject is less important than how it is depicted. The beauty of photography for me is the constant evolution of the photographer in the process. My goal is to inspire those who see my work to look more carefully at the world around them, to discover beauty in unusual places.”

Over the past several years Richard has been the recipient of a number of 1st and 2nd place awards. “Finn Slough” was 1st in Advanced Monochrome in the year-end competition in 2016. Richard shot this image with a Panasonic Lumix G1 he had converted for IR photography. “Heavy Metal Plant Works” placed 2nd in the Advanced Digital Theme category, the judge commenting on how well the image evoked emotion because of Richard’s excellent post-processing work. “Loch Awe” placed 1st in the March 2017 Open Print Competition.

Our Club has greatly benefited from having such a talented and hard-working member as Richard. He is a dedicated volunteer and an excellent example of one who has striven for excellence in photography.



“Loch Awe”

Inconsistent Exposure

by Roger Botting

Recently, I was looking at a forum on Facebook where a writer was wondering why one of their lenses consistently exposed about one f-stop less exposure than their other lens. The lens in question was of a different brand from their other lens and their concern was that the lens was not properly communicating with the camera body.

I followed through with a number of questions and the answers showed one thing. That the writer didn't really know how modern camera lenses are made or work.

The writer was asked if their camera correctly exposed when using the auto exposure setting. Yes, proper exposure. He then explained that, on auto exposure, the EXIF data showed exposure settings approximately one stop different from that of his other lens.

Ah! The revelation. It appears that the lens that exposed differently was a different brand and was a long, fast zoom lens.

Zoom lenses are made of many elements with some lenses containing as many as twenty elements. Each lens element is made of optical glass or plastic and each absorbs a small amount of light. Perhaps half of one percent of the light that enters the lens is absorbed by each element. With many elements this adds up. The other reason for not as much light getting through a lens is its mechanical and/or optical construction.

We have all seen lenses that change the maximum f-stop as the lens is zoomed. Your lens might be f4 at its shortest focal length and f5.6 at its longest. This is caused by limitations in the lens design. As you change the focal length of the lens the elements inside move in relation to each other. This affects the effective f-stop of the lens. Some lenses change the aperture to compensate and some don't and sometimes (no never) lenses are marked in a way that is too optimistic meaning it's not quite as advertised. As many people shoot on auto, this isn't usually noticed.

But, in this case, the writer claims to shoot only on manual and didn't know to compensate for the rather optimistic effective lens speed. He now knows.

Lens apertures have traditionally been marked in f-stops. The f-stop is the ratio of the aperture diameter to the focal length. With a simple one-element lens it is easy to calculate. A lens with a 10 mm aperture and a focal length

of 40 mm is f4. The same lens stopped (closed) down to a 5 mm aperture is f8. Do the math and you will find it transmits $\frac{1}{4}$ or 2 stops less light. The area enclosed by a circle of radius r is πr^2 . The area of the lens determines the amount of light coming through it.

The f-stop is a ratio (not a fraction) as in 1:4 is f4, and f2 is a larger aperture than f11. Some people, mistakenly believe that f11 is a bigger aperture than f2. All lenses for conventional photographic use are marked this way. An f8 lens lets the same amount of light through whether it's a short or long focal length or brand X or Y. At least it's supposed to be.

But let's consider the lowly micro lens. The f-stop is the ratio of the lens opening to the focal length. For normal photography focal length is measured at infinity. However, focusing closer requires the lens to move away from the focal plane. At life size, the optical centre of the lens might be twice as far away from the focal plane as it would be at infinity. The Effective Focal Length is now twice as long. Using an aperture of 10 mm and the new effective focal length of 80 mm the lens is now an f8 lens and not the f4 lens it is at infinity. The proper exposure at infinity is not the same close-up, even in the same lighting conditions.

Hollywood long ago came to realize this was not the best way to measure light transmission through a lens. They learned the hard way that not all lenses transmit light in the same amounts despite the mathematical descriptions. This resulted in lots of inconsistencies of exposure and was a real pain when editing film.

Hollywood then started to measure the amount of light actually being transmitted through a lens and came up with what they called t-stops. All lenses with a t-stop of 4 transmitted the same amount of light and exposure was consistent between lenses.

This is very important when hundreds of thousands of dollars depended on getting the shot right the first time. To put it simply, f-stop is a calculated value while the t-stop is a measured value.

Do we need t-stops on camera lenses rather than the not-quite-accurate f-stop? It might be nice, but it usually it isn't needed. Most modern cameras with their TTL (through-the-lens) metering will compensate for the differing amounts of light being transmitted through the lens. The only time this doesn't work is when you are shooting on manual.

But, I assume, when you are shooting on manual that you already know this.

Photoshop Colour Grading Tips

by Gordon Griffiths

Colour grading is a process used by photographers to change the visual tone of an image by manipulating colours. Colour grading can significantly change the aesthetics and mood of an image. There is a difference between colour correction and colour grading. Colour correction is intended to make a photo look exactly the way the human eye views a scene. Colour grading is generally used to create and convey a visual tone or mood.

One way to colour grade in Photoshop is by using a Gradient Map. This is located under the layers heading in the top tool bar or in the adjustment layers tab at the bottom of the layers palette. (See here: helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/applying-special-color-effects-images.html, at bottom.)

The Gradient Map (“Map”) is often confused with the Gradient Fill. The Gradient Fill is a wash of colour. It does not care about underlying colours and tones. The Gradient Map affects the colours and tones directly. It assigns colours to the most appropriate colour and tone in the image. The Map identifies colour values from 0 to 255 and replaces them with the selected gradient. The darkest areas in a photo take on the darkest colour in the Map, the lightest areas take on the lightest colour.

The Map is useful in composite images. It can give them a unified look. It can be used to colour grade an individual photo. The shadows, mid-tones and highlights are colour graded with a single adjustment layer.

When the Map is opened, the default gradient is black to white displaying the tones in the photo. Click on the Map and the whole range of gradients becomes available. The effect of a purple to tan gradient can be seen in the Map Image.

You can choose different colours for the dark and light areas of an image. Usually, a dark colour is chosen for the dark areas and a light one for the light areas. The recommended blend modes to use on the Map’s layer are soft light, overlay or colour. Try soft light first as overlay generally has the strongest effect.

The Map also impacts the transition in colours through the mid-tones and one can adjust this impact by moving the middle slider at the bottom of the gradient.

You can choose colours and tones and create your own gradients to use in the Map. If they are successful,

you can load your own gradients into the gradient palette in Photoshop.



“Map Image”

The Blend If function in Photoshop blends one layer into another based on the content of the layers. It can be a useful tool in colour grading to protect areas of a photo that you do not want to be affected by the colour grading. Blend If masks out part of a layer based on the luminosity of pixels much like a luminosity mask.

Blend If is located in Layer Styles. To access it, double click on the right-hand side of the selected layer in the layer stack. Blend If is located at the bottom of the Layer Styles dialogue.

The section of Blend If called “This Layer” looks only at the tones in the top selected layer, in this case, the Map. The “Underlying Layer(s)” represents the tones and values in the underlying visible layers.

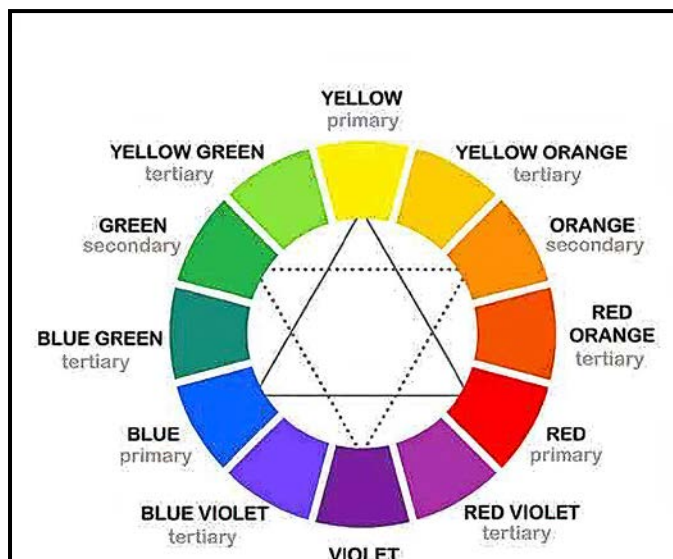
You may not want the Map to apply to all areas of the photo. For example, if you want to protect the highlight areas from the Map, you would move the right-hand light slider in the underlying layer to the left to a point where the highlight areas are no longer affected by the Map. To avoid an abrupt transition from the colour grade to the original image hold down the Alt/Option key and click on the adjusted slider. It will split in half. The right-hand half of that slider can then be moved back to the right to feather the transition from the Map to the protected highlights. The same process can be used with the other sliders in the Underlying Layer to protect other areas of the image.

Blend modes are a good way to expand the power of layers in Photoshop. A Blend Mode takes the pixels of one layer and blends them with the pixels of another layer to create a new effect. Blending modes are

a useful tool in adjusting colours. Blending modes do much more than adjust opacity and fill. The way layers blend is determined by the algorithm of each blend mode. The Difference Blend Mode ("Difference") is one of the component group of blend modes. (See Blend Modes here: helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/blending-modes.html.)

The traditional use of Difference has been to align layers. Difference subtracts the pixels of the base and blend layers and the result is a greater brightness value if the layers are not aligned. However, when you subtract two pixels with the same colour value the result is black. When you put two images together in different layers in Photoshop and apply Difference, it is easy to see when the images are aligned. If the resulting image is black, the alignment is good. If the alignment is out, the Move tool can be used to line up the edges of the elements until the image is totally black. This process can be used to ensure the alignment of hand-held landscape images or hand-held macro work.

There is another lesser-known way to use Difference to colour grade a photo. Add a solid colour fill layer for example blue, to an image and then change the blend mode of the colour fill layer to Difference. The blue colour will be applied to the dark areas of the photo and the blue colour will also be inverted to yellow, its complementary colour on the colour wheel, and will automatically be applied to the light areas of the photo. The result is a harmonious colour gradation that uses complementary colour principles to create a natural colour grade. The colour wheel illustrates what colours will be applied in this process.



"Colour Wheel"

The transition through the photo from blue to yellow is usually gradual. However, the application of blue and

yellow to the photo can be changed using the opacity and fill sliders located in the layer dialogue.

Opacity affects and governs the intensity of the colour applied in the colour grade. Fill has an important role. It changes the rate and intensity of the transition from blue to yellow in my example. If fill is reduced significantly, one will not get the full or pure complementary yellow colour in the lightest areas of the photo. Also, if you select a colour with a high level of black in it for the fill layer, the dark shadow areas of the image will show a high amount of this colour, and the highlights will not receive as much of a proportionate adjustment or change of the complementary colour. So, using this, one can colour grade between the highlights and shadow areas.



"Colour Ramp"

I hope you will try both Gradient Map and the Difference blend mode in your Photoshop workflow and add your own creative touch to your images.



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How I Did It

Comet Neowise

by Alec Lee

Having Comet Neowise grace our northern skies this July presented a photographic opportunity not found since Comet Hale-Bopp in 1997. So, in the late evening on July 18th, 2020 I took my camera gear to Thetis Lake. With clear skies and a still lake, capturing the Comet's reflection was a real possibility.

The dimensions of the comet are staggering. At a distance of 103 million kms and travelling at 28,000 km/hour, the brightness of its 5 km diameter nucleus and 16 million km long dust tail was striking.

This image was taken with a 14-24 mm lens set at 17 mm with my Nikon D810 on manual. Settings were f2.8, ISO 2000, 13 second exposure, EV at -4.7 from the metered exposure, and auto WB (Temp 5300, tint -4). Given the long exposure, a tripod was a necessity. Focusing on a bright star was done through LiveView. I levelled the camera to the virtual horizon and set the exposure delay to 2 seconds to minimize blurring due to possible movement during shutter release.



"Comet Neowise"

Using Adobe Camera Raw, I made modifications to the RAW image including slightly boosting the contrast, exposure, vibrance and whites, while dropping highlights and blacks. In Photoshop, the image was denoised and sharpened (Topaz Denoise) and cropped. I removed unwanted parts of the image, including tree branches and satellites (an increasing problem with night sky photography) using Photoshop's Edit/Fill/Content Aware feature. Topaz Sharpen was used on the final jpeg image to bring out the Comet and star more. The result made my night!!

The Wanaka Tree

by Neil Boyle

This is the most photographed tree in the world. It is a willow that grew from a post in a fence erected about 80 years ago when the lake was lower, near Wanaka, a small town in the South Island of New Zealand. The lake rises and falls, depending on droughts and rain-fall, sometimes exposing the ground below the tree and sometimes rising above the lower limb. The hard part is making a photograph that doesn't look like the millions of other photographs of "That Tree".



"The Wanaka Tree"

I visited the tree four times over three days in November 2019 and there were never less than twenty people photographing it, most with cell phones, but there were often a few photographic rigs more complicated than my tripod-mounted Nikon Z6 with its native 24-70 mm lens.

This was shot early in the morning as clouds rolled in over the hills and islands, under an umbrella, as we arrived mid-way through a ten-day stretch of non-stop rain. The smooth water and the cloud pattern come from a 71-second long-exposure shot with nine stops of neutral density filter which blurred the leaves of the tree. The sharp leaves in the photo come from a 1/45th second shot, exposed to bring out some detail in the trunk.

I processed the RAW files in Lightroom, increasing the exposure to maximize the whiteness of the clouds and adding a little texture and dehaze to bring out structural details in the tree and the hills. In the long exposure shot, using graduated filters, I emphasized the cloud details and smoothed the water (texture, clarity and dehaze sliders), and removed a number of small floating objects and some sensor dust spots. In the sharp image, I emphasized the leaves (texture and dehaze), and lightened the trunk to bring out some detail. I combined them in Photoshop, masking out the blurry leaves to replace them with the sharp ones.

Shoots Around Victoria

Mill Bay Bridge

by Vanessa MacDonald

The Mill Bay Bridge has, up until recently, been a less well-known attraction among local photographers. There are not many man-made structures around the Island that have that fairy-tale old-world feel about them, so this charming moss-covered stone bridge with a waterfall in front is a bit of a hidden gem. In the last year, a few popular Vancouver Island vloggers have featured this location in their content, essentially putting it on the map for the rest of us. I have lived on Vancouver Island for over eleven years, and I've only just learned about it.



"Mill Bay Bridge"

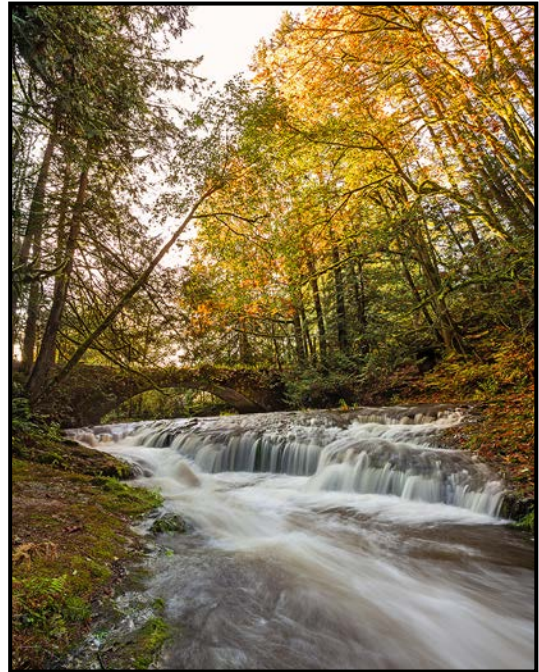
As it turns out, it is very easily accessed via a short five-minute detour off of the Trans-Canada highway when passing through Mill Bay. The bridge spans Shawnigan Creek, and it can be found via a short trail located at the very end of Barry Road.

Basically, you turn left (when going north) onto Barry Road from the Trans-Canada Highway, where you see Tim Hortons and McDonalds, and keep to the right. When you get to the end of Barry Road, park on the shoulder right at the dead-end. You will see the trail going into the woods. It is no more than a two-minute walk and you're at the bridge.

There are some good vantage points to shoot from on either side of the river. The river is flanked by steep banks and, though there are ledges to walk on, there is not much space to move around on them. So please be very careful, and wear boots with good treads, because the banks along the river can be very slippery and wet. I wouldn't recommend this location for anyone who is unsteady on their feet or afraid that they may fall. Depending on how heavy the flow of the river is, the space you have available along the banks to set up your gear may change.

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The best times of year to go would be either the Fall or Spring. In the Fall, you will get pops of colourful foliage from the deciduous trees alongside the river. Chances are in the summer months it will be a bit dry and you probably will not get much of a waterfall happening, that is a big part of what makes this spot appealing. After heavy winter rains, there would be periods of time where the volume of water could prevent access to the good vantage points for shooting. So, shoulder seasons are your best bet. Try to avoid visiting immediately after heavy rainfall in the winter months.



"Mill Bay Bridge in Fall"

Another thing I want to highlight is the direction of the sun. If you time your visit just right, it would be possible to get a sun star happening right over the bridge late in the day. My best estimate would be to get there two to three hours before sunset. I have seen other local photographers succeed with their timing and get this spectacular effect in late Spring.

I have found that this location is a great place for doing long exposures of flowing water. There are many different angles and compositions to explore, with both wide-angle and mid-range zoom lenses. There are lots of rock ledges and features in the river for water to tumble over, providing a nice effect.

Given the limited places where you can stand, trying some vertical or horizontal panoramas can help you to get a lot more of the scene into a single frame.

All in all, this is a great little spot for waterfall photography and it is easy to stop in any time you are passing through Mill Bay.

Focus Stacking

by Neil Boyle

Stacking is a photographic technique using multiple images to solve a problem that can't be fixed with a single photograph. A number of images are recorded, while changing some factor, and then combined in software to produce an improved image. HDR uses images with varying brightness to show a higher dynamic range than the camera sensor can manage. Panoramas combine overlapping offset images to make a higher resolution image. Olympus has a pixel shift mode in which the sensor is moved slightly for each image and the combined image has a much higher resolution than the sensor, when still, can produce. Star image stacking is used to reduce noise in astrophotography.

Focus stacking is used to control how much of the image is in focus and sharp and what the bokeh (out-of-focus highlights) looks like. There are three common uses for this technique. In landscape photography, the foreground and the background elements can all be sharp. In close up, macro and microscope photography, the depth-of-field (DOF) can be increased significantly. The bokeh (out-of-focus highlights) can be modified with minimal loss of sharpness.



"Lavender"

We need to define some terms. Focus bracketing is the collection of images of the same scene while varying the focal point. Focus stacking is the software process to blend the focus-bracketed images. Focus differential is the amount the focus is changed between shots. Depth-of-field (DOF) is how much of the scene is in focus (this cannot be changed in an individual image in post-processing). This is not the same as resolution, which measures how much detail there is (and can be enhanced by sharpening). Lens breathing is a change in the image magnification as the focus is changed.

There are two techniques for changing the focal point. In the rail technique, the camera is mounted on a rail, the focal point is fixed on the near end of the subject and the camera is advanced towards the subject, taking an image every set distance.

The camera can be moved manually (tedious and prone to error) or mechanically. Cognisys makes a completely programmable, automated rail system (Stackshot). A variant of this, in which the lens is attached to the camera by a bellows, moves the lens only. Photographing through a microscope falls in this category.

In the ring technique the camera focus ring is rotated a tiny amount to move the focal point between each photo. When this is done manually the change in focal differential varies and errors happen frequently. In-camera focus bracketing uses the camera to control this, producing accurate results. Most modern camera manufacturers make at least some models that can do in-camera ring method focus bracketing: Nikon, Canon, Olympus, Fuji, Panasonic. Currently, Sony does not. Nowadays, when possible, the ring method is simpler, faster, easier to set up, and produces better results.



"Mushrooms"

In-camera focus bracketing is often unnecessarily complex and each manufacturer has its own limitations, i.e. in the Nikon D850, Z6 and Z7, the software allows the user to choose the focal differentiation but doesn't define the differences, so some trial and error is needed.

A better solution is external software. Camranger (high-end remote control) and Helicon Remote make software to control the process from a iPad or smart phone, or DigiCamControl and Helicon Remote for setups tethered to an Android tablet or Windows machine. The functionality of these programs significantly exceeds the in-camera methods. A few cameras do in-camera focus bracketing and stacking for a single output image, with significant restrictions as the trade-off for convenience.

Merging the focus-bracketed images can be done by commercial software, either a post-processing package such as Photoshop (greatly improved in the last few years), Affinity Photos, ON1 Photo RAW 2020, or by dedicated stand-alone programs such as Helicon Focus or Zerene Stacker. The stand-alone programs offer more options and methods of stacking, often leading to more realistic results and fewer errors needing correction.

There are decisions to be made before setting up. What needs to be in focus and what not, what needs to be sharp and if there is bokeh, what should it look like? Much of this is controlled by the aperture. The aperture dictates the DOF of individual images but this is less important as stacking will be used to make the DOF of the final image. Fewer shots will need to be stacked with a smaller aperture and a resultant greater DOF (leading to faster processing) but sharpness decreases with small apertures due to diffraction (becoming noticeable at f-stops smaller than about f8). For every lens, there is a sweet spot, the aperture that produces the sharpest image, the one to be used if sharpness is the ultimate goal. You can look this up for your lens, test it yourself, or assume that it is 2-3 stops down from wide open (usually this works). If bokeh is an important aspect of the image, then the lens and aperture must be carefully selected to get the desired results, possibly moving away from the lens sharpness sweet spot.



"Dragonfly"

Camera settings (aperture, shutter speed, ISO) should be manual to avoid changes from image to image. For the sharpest image, the camera is fixed on a tripod, the shutter is triggered remotely to avoid camera shake, the mirror can be locked up, and the delay between shots can be set to avoid camera vibration. Clearly the subject needs to be still but minor blurring due to subject motion can be reduced by the choice of shutter speed, ISO

and light source. If using a flash, the interval between shots must be set to accommodate the flash recharging. RAW conversion can be done in Helicon Focus or your preferred raw converter. Post-processing is most efficient if done only on the stacked image.

Stacking can fail for a number of obvious reasons: subject or camera movement between shots makes it hard to align the images; changes in the image between shots (i.e. a fly landing on a flower for the middle few shots); lighting changes (especially with natural light); focus differential is too large (some aspects of the image weren't sharp in any image); the distance between the nearest and furthest elements of the image is too great (results in distortion in the final image).

Ideally, all the focus-bracketed images will be identical, except for the focal point. While this may well happen with landscapes, it doesn't in macro photography. In the rail method, as the camera moves, the perspective changes and elements closer to the lens appear proportionately larger. Lens breathing in the ring method leads to changes in the size of the entire image. Both of these problems worsen as the lens gets closer to the subject and are reduced with longer focal length lenses used further away. Lens breathing can be reduced with proper lens design and this is sometimes found in more expensive macro lenses.



"Hen and Chicks"

The stacking software has to deal with these variations in images and there are differences in how well each program does this. All methods of stacking can lead to local aberrations in the image, halos, blurred or duplicated edges, unreal looking elements, etc. Often these can be reduced or eliminated by changing the variables in the software. Fortunately, most of the software can be tested free for a short period and it is a good idea to run the same focus bracketed images through each to find the best one for you. Focus stacking is a specialized photographic genre with a bit of a learning curve but well worth the effort if you shoot landscapes or macro.

Beginner's Corner: Camera Menu Set-Up

by Joseph Finkleman

In this digital age photography has become easier in some ways but in others much more complex. Film cameras are relatively simple machines; I never looked at a manual for any of the thirteen film camera systems I used. By contrast, for the five digital camera bodies and two systems I own, I have read every manual, including the ones for the lenses, cover to cover.

In this short article, there is no possibility you will learn what a 500-page manual might cover. Instead, I will discuss some of the menu settings that are very important. If you are shooting in RAW, my assumption is that you know how to set up your camera for your particular needs but if you wish to shoot in JPEG, then the first thing is to set your JPEG file size and quality (which you will find in Shooting Menu) to large and fine. You want as much quality as you can get.

While you are in the Shooting Menu you generally have three choices for metering: spot metering, center weighted and general averaging. Set your metering to center weighted. (Some cameras have this as an external control while others do not.) This gives you a good exposure overall but, more importantly, a great exposure in that part of the picture you are most interested in.

Setting your Focus Area is highly individualistic. Cameras are increasingly sophisticated in this area and there is a wide variety of focus points possible. Personally, I use a single point because it fits my shooting style. Some people have a large number of points, and that fits their style. My recommendation is to start with one and then expand. Experiment with this to see what works best for you. Set your White Balance to Auto. When shooting in JPEG you are always better off manually setting your white balance in accordance with the conditions, although Auto will work most of the time.

Some cameras have extended Dynamic Range. I have mixed feelings about this setting as it will make your shadows a bit noisier. On my Nikon I do not use this feature. On my Fuji I do. It depends on the camera, upon you, and what you want from the capture.

Face detection is another individual choice (and now animal face detection on some cameras). I find it annoying in a group but useful when I am photographing one person.

I like the Exposure and Focus Locks to be engaged when I depress the shutter halfway for a still subject. This gives me a chance to re-compose my frame and then fully depress the shutter release. When the subject is moving, however, I move the single focusing point within the frame to where I am going to place the subject then my focus and exposure locks as I am depressing the shutter.

In my opinion the most valuable thing you can do in making a digital capture is to use the histogram. If you can, have it in your frame as you take the image; otherwise have it on playback and learn how to read it. In a RAW capture, always expose hard to the right (ETTR). For a JPEG, underexpose about a stop or whatever looks good on the screen. A mirrorless camera's advantage is "What you see is what you get" (WYSIWYG), while on a DSLR you need to adjust the playback to match the output.

There is a variety of settings that affect the colour or monochrome look of a JPEG. My Nikon has only a few while the Fuji has a myriad. Experiment with this and see what looks best for you and your subject. There are no right or wrong settings and every manufacturer has different ideas. Remember that if you set "monochrome" and shoot only in JPEG that is all you get. If you shoot RAW, the data is still in colour and you can choose, in processing, to use the in-camera version, create your own monochrome version, or leave it as colour.

In-camera sharpening is a good idea on a JPEG. A lot of sharpening is a very bad idea as is a lot of noise reduction. Since I shoot in RAW, I set these settings to zero, but for JPEG I would recommend setting sharpening to +1. This has nothing to do with an image being sharp. It cleans up an unavoidable artifact in the anti-aliasing filter and refines the edges of the pixels. If you are shooting RAW, then set the sharpening to zero (off).

Until you learn and experiment with most of the settings, you are best served to set them to zero. Just because a camera has a setting in the menu does not mean you need it. When shooting RAW these settings can really interfere as you process the capture. If your camera offers both mechanical and electronic shutters, use the mechanical shutter only until you learn much more about what, when, and why to use the electronic shutter.

Most cameras offer some eyepiece diopter adjustments to suit your specific vision requirements. These are generally a manual adjustment on the viewfinder itself, but not always.

The most valuable advice is to read the manual to learn all the wondrous things your camera can do.

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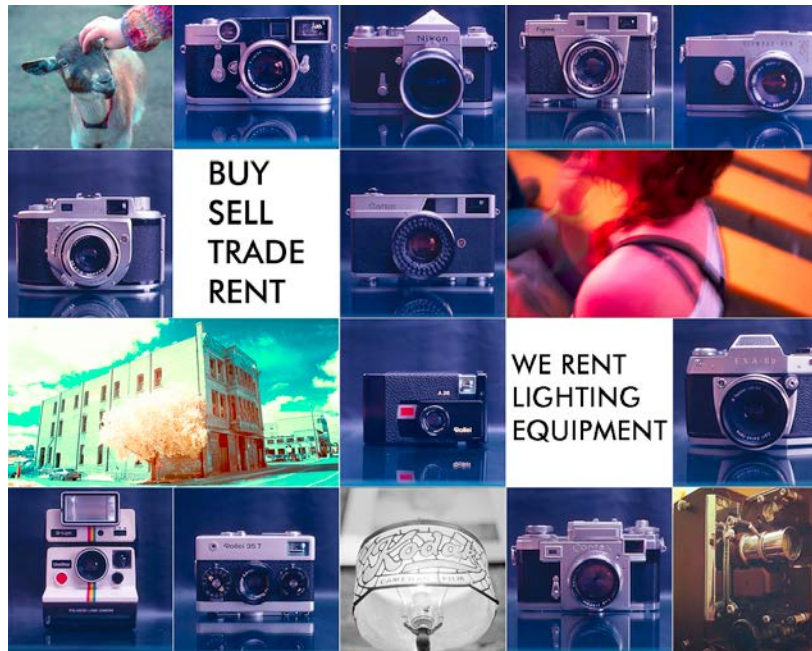
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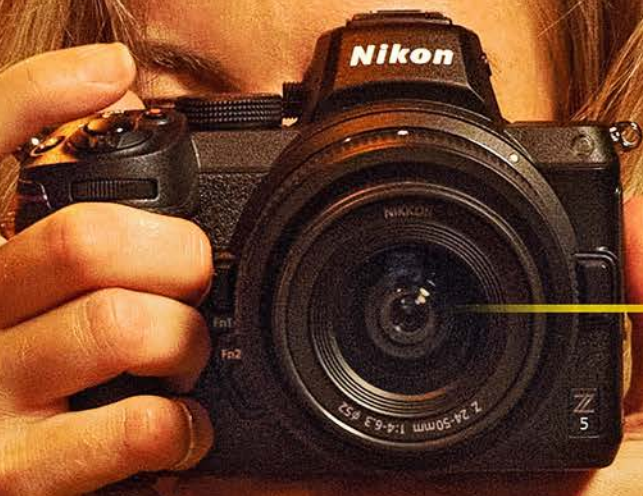
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