

CCV



Close-Up

VictoriaCameraClub.ca



**Long Exposure Effect:
Using Multiple Exposures
A Camera in Your Pocket
Housebound Photography
Adjust Your Monitor!
Tech Tips: What is ETTR?
Member Profile: Bob Law
Outside the Box
Walk Around It
Photography Projects
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Victoria Camera Club



“Waves” by Bob Law

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

Events

We hold a number of events including:

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

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

Membership

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

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

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May - July 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, workshops and field trips are cancelled until further notice due to health precautions.

Hopefully, we can resume our schedule in September. Please check the website for updates when restrictions allow meetings again.

Ted Grant:1929-2020. Renowned Canadian photo-journalist, Dr. Ted Grant, OC, passed away April 18th in Victoria. Known for many newsworthy images including his image of Pierre Trudeau sliding down the banister at the 1968 Liberal Party convention in Ottawa, his series of medical images shot in Ottawa, Victoria and other hospitals as well as his image of Ben Johnson crossing the Olympic finishing line. Ted used his trademark Leica almost daily and enjoyed meeting with a small group of print-makers until early this year.

Cover Image: “An Easter Toast” by Alison Poole. I am often drawn to my camera to photograph something indoors on a rainy day. Lately it has not been the rain keeping us indoors, but that is another story. This photograph, in landscape orientation, was posted to the Covid 19 Distraction Project, Easter edition. Our *Close-Up* Editor, Richard James, thought he would try it on the cover. With my permission he gave it a wee flip vertically tossing one of the eggs from the martini glass in the process!

The decorative eggs, commonly known as Ukrainian Easter eggs, are referred to as pysankas by their creators. Three were decorated by my daughter Alanna when she was in grade one, back in the mid-1990s. The other two were a gift to my mother from a dear Ukrainian friend of mine.

The photo was taken a few years back with my old Nikon D7000. Placing a black fleece blanket on the table I set the scene. The lens used was an AF-S VR Micro-Nikkor 105 mm f2.8 G IF-ED. I used a tripod. My manual settings were f11, 1/6th second, ISO 200 and I bounced my Nikon SB 900 TTL flash off the ceiling.

I have a lot of fun with this type of indoor photography. In the last edition of *Close-Up*, April 2020, my “Hibernation” photograph on page 13 was taken in much the same way. Give it a try; you will no doubt have lots of time to explore new possibilities yourself.

President's Message

What a difference one month can make. Last month, I wrote about our upcoming AGM. Little did I know that, instead of having our AGM at the usual Norway House meeting, we would have to find a way to have it virtually and that all Club meetings, workshops and field trips would be cancelled for the foreseeable future. I am also keenly aware that from the time that I write this message to when it is actually released, there will be many more changes to our lives due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am missing our meetings that are all things social where we can connect with friends and catch up on the latest news. One of the questions on everyone's mind is: “When is this all going to end so we can get back to getting together and take photos or learn at our many workshops?” I am unable to answer this question but urge all members to heed our governments' advice and look forward to when all of our efforts will help flatten the curve.

In the meantime, our virtual AGM has been done and we will continue to plan for our future. Our executive has been conducting our meetings virtually as well and our next meeting will be the handover to the new executive. Many thanks to John Clarke, our outgoing Treasurer, and Grant Hughes, our outgoing Member-at-Large. Their contributions to the Club have been greatly appreciated and we wish them well. The new executive is:

- President – Teri VanWell
- Vice-President – Dan Takahashi
- Vice-President – Penny Authier
- Treasurer – Robert Law
- Secretary – Susan McRae
- Member-at-Large – Jill Turyk
- Member-at-Large – Kim Smith

While we wait for the time when we can get together again, there are many things that you can do at home or in a safe space outside practicing social distancing. For starters, there are many online courses that you can take through YouTube, Lynda.com (free with a GVPL card at gvpl.ca), CreativeLive or Kelby One. Some are free but all allow you to learn some new skills in the world of photography. How about putting together your own workshop to share with members? Then there is the Distraction Project that Lorna Shaw has put together for members. A weekly themed project that members can work on and post their images on our website.

Whatever your plans are, stay safe and healthy.

Teri VanWell, President

Long Exposure Effect: Using Multiple Exposures

by Kirk Schwartz

Landscape photographers love long exposures, using them to create creamy-smooth water and feathery motion-blurred clouds. Most often, to get a long enough exposure time, you need a Neutral Density (ND) filter but you can get a similar effect by shooting multiple exposures of the same shot and combining them in Photoshop.

For best results you should use a tripod and a remote shutter release or an intervalometer. The more shots you take, the better the final blend will be but the harder it will be for your computer to process all the images.



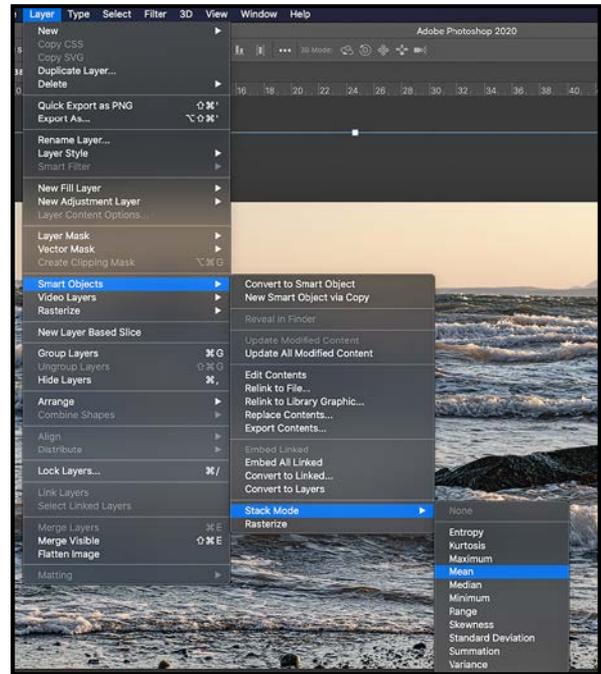
“One Image from Sequence”

First, develop your RAW image and sync the settings to the images in your sequence. I use Adobe Camera Raw and Bridge rather than Lightroom, but it's your choice. If you use JPEGs you might not get the same image quality.

You need to open the images as layers in an image stack in Photoshop by selecting “File>Scripts>Load files into Stacks”. If you have loaded the images as individual tabs in Photoshop select “Add Open Files” in the dialogue box.

Unless your tripod was super steady or if you were trying to shoot hand-held, you need to align the images. Choose “Edit>Auto-align Layers”. Now, with all layers selected, right click or control click and choose “Convert to Smart Object” from the pop-up menu.

Unless you have a fast computer go fill up your coffee cup. This is hard work for the computer so don't be surprised if it takes a bit and your computer's fans come on. Once your computing friend and companion has finished converting the stack to a smart object, you have only one small step remaining (though your



“Merging the Images”

computer might not think it's that small a step). Next you will select “Layer>Smart Objects>Stack Mode>Mean” and, voilà, your final product is ready for you to export for the pleasure of the photographic world.

Here are a couple of links for you to explore for more explanation and detail:

- FStoppers: fstoppers.com/education/using-long-exposures-without-help-neutral-density-filters-345545
- Mark Duffy: youtube.com/watch?v=2ig5LiZ1P5E
- Adobe Photoshop, using image stacks: helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/image-stacks.html
- Two ways to hack long exposure by Joshua Cripps Photography: youtu.be/amC606SLxCg

And, finally, now that you have mastered this technique, take a look at this final photo. You can try using the other stack modes for creative oddities and effects.



“Final Image”

A Camera in Your Pocket

by Daniel A. Roy

As another hobby I write science fiction stories, delving into my imagination to create tales about how our lives might be affected by the ever-escalating changes in technology. Most of my writings take place many hundreds of years from now but this story touches on technical applications that will be available in the next five to ten years. This article has been written mostly to entertain but, hopefully, it will also invoke a degree of wonder, prompting you, the reader to imagine what life might be like in the very near future.

This past summer I observed a young man capturing “street” images in the heart of downtown. Even a novice could see that he was using some pretty expensive gear. We struck up a conversation and he told me that the lens alone cost him over two-thousand dollars. “It’s all about the glass, man,” he said, as he snapped an image of a woman dressed entirely in yellow. She was window-shopping along the other side of the street, totally oblivious to the fact that she had been photographed.

He chimed the capture and showed me the result. I was impressed and told him so. The photographer handed me his card and I have since viewed his website. Again, I was impressed, astonished at how proficient a twenty-something photographer could be. However, while Googling, I fell into a rabbit hole and happened upon another young professional street shooter whose images were entirely caught with the use of his smartphone. Unsurprisingly, the pics weren’t as “crisp” as the ones taken with the expensive gear but the mood of the smartphone images were much more personal and, in my opinion, superior, each stimulating my imagination and urging me to linger a while longer.

What are the more obvious elements of a good photograph? Subject, composition, perspective, lighting, contrast, and (unless you are shooting black and white) colour. In order to capture a digital image, do any of these elements require a camera with a full-frame sensor? No, not unless the photographer intends to produce a print of considerable size or to have that image scrutinized by a panel of judges for a fine arts photography competition.

However, as manufacturing companies continue developing smaller and smaller elements that produce sharper and sharper details through increased pixel density and improved optics, the quality gap between an expensive full-frame camera and a smartphone will decrease. And, I’m going to step out on a limb and state that the

gap between them will someday become so minuscule, the measure will be irrelevant. Please take a moment to mark this date on your calendar. By September 2025, a smartphone will produce an image virtually equal to that of a full-frame camera using the same or similar post-processing methods.

Some might say this idea is pure fantasy but, I assure you, it’s not. It reminds me of a quote I heard many years ago in reference to all the manufacturing companies that continued producing typewriters at that point in time, “You’d think they would have seen the typewriting on the wall.” So, if you are thinking of purchasing a new full-frame camera, or even one with a smaller format, you may want to hold that thought and wait another year or two. I would also encourage the big camera companies to invest in the smartphone markets.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a thing. It exists. Not yet a true AI as I envision it, but the term is widely accepted. Your camera and lenses (assuming your gear is reasonably current) already utilize this technology: autofocus, autoexposure, image stabilization and tracking, to mention only a few, all these features are married to our computers and software.

AI is the process of identifying commonalities and differences amongst a data set that lead to specific outcomes. Some are easy, almost trivial, such as getting the exposure right. That is simply ensuring that the highlights are not blown out and that there is sufficient detail in the shadows. Others are more complex such as is the depth-of-field adequate? Measuring depth of field is trivial but what does “adequate” really mean? It depends on the subject and how you wish to interpret it.

Perhaps the most complex area in photography is determining how “good” an image is. How do we define good? Does the composition comply with some predetermined rules (rule of thirds, for example)? This is easily done but does it produce a truly good image? Are the rules the same for different uses of the image? Does a “fine art” image have to obey the same rules as an image produced for an advertisement, or for a photographic competition? The danger with rules is that they reduce everything to a lowest common denominator. To be successful they have to allow for innovation and, even lead it.

Once a “true AI” is available, you will no longer need to mouse or to type a query or spend hours searching through files on your computer. You will only have to utter a phrase as simple as: “Winston, please choose a series of images for next week’s Members’ Night. And, Winston...” “Yes, Daniel?” “I want to hear nothing but oohs and aahs throughout the entire presentation.”

Housebound Photography

by Pam Irvine

There is a lot you can do with photography while you are stuck at home. Practice your fast/slow shutter speed by photographing the dog or cat or, try panning (moving the camera with your moving subject). Try some rim lighting (light from the side or back) to emphasize the fur.

Lightbox: You could build yourself a light box and practice your still life and macro photography.



“Simple Lightbox”

To build this lightbox I cut holes in three sides of a good-sized sturdy cardboard box. I then reinforced the edges of the box with duct tape and covered the holes with tissue paper as a diffuser. A grey or white piece of curved poster board is held in place with clips and gives a seamless background.

With a setup like this you can really practice your lighting skills, paying attention to the reflections on your object and shadows created by the placement of your lights.

Still Life Photography: Still life is a work of art that focuses on inanimate subjects. Usually, the subjects are commonplace objects.

When creating a still life photograph you need to find ways to make your subject visually interesting. By experimenting with different arrangements, lighting, and compositions, still life photographers can breathe life into their subjects. That makes it a great genre to experiment with and it can help you become a better photographer.

Creativity and Inspiration: During this period of home isolation, I have been watching a number of photography workshops. Creativelive.com is filmed in Seattle, offers a free workshop every day and also has a cre-

ator’s pass (annual pass) that allows you to watch all of their hundreds of workshops on a wide variety of topics. One subject I was interested in was “Where to find inspiration”.

Lindsay Alder and Brooke Shaden, producers of one of the classes, spent some time comparing their individual creative processes:

Lindsay said, “Creativity isn’t luck. Inspirations doesn’t come from thin air.”

Brooke said, “I will not wait for inspiration. I will search for it. The first step to finding inspiration is to be willing to fail.”

Their suggestions on how to search for inspiration included looking at the works of other artists. Analyze their work and identify what it is that speaks to you, perhaps the use of lighting or the colour palette. Then take those concepts and use them to create your own vision in your own style.

Another suggestion was to write down a theme or one word about something that you love or enjoy. Then write down all the words that come to mind that you associate with your original word. It could be a list that includes, colours, flowers, movies, songs, or anything. Then do a Google search on these words and see what fascinating images come up on the screen to inspire you.

Creativity doesn’t stop at the click of the shutter, it continues into post-processing. Practice a new technique and push it to the limits. You never know what you are going to create until you try, maybe a photo of strawberry-red lips created with layers and blending modes in Photoshop Elements.



“Strawberry Lips”

Adjust Your Monitor!

by Doug Neal

Many of us do not have a monitor calibration device but find printed images consistently come out dark or off-colour. If so, you need to adjust your monitor settings using the monitor menu options. You may also need to use free or built-in software so that the on-screen image more closely matches a quality print from a good lab.

To do this you will need a quality print of a digital test chart. Download the sRGB version of this chart from olantra.com/testchart.zip (original article at outbackphoto.com/printinginsights/pi048/essay.html). A matte finish print is best. Prism Imaging has offered to print a 5x7 sample of it for \$2 and The Print Lab has offered to provide a print of the chart at no charge to VCC members!



No print will exactly match a monitor but general brightness, contrast, and mid-grey tones can be adjusted to reduce differences.

You will also need a desk lamp with a 60-watt equivalent daylight LED bulb (5000K to 6500K) for evaluating the print. The test environment should be as follows:

- A dimly-lit room.
- Desk lamp facing down onto four sheets of white paper arranged in a rectangle with the test print in the middle.
- Your monitor should be on for 20+ minutes to stabilize the output and be positioned 1.2 to 2 meters away from the test print. Turn and angle the monitor to be square to your viewing position.
- Display the test chart full screen on the monitor.

Before you begin, select sRGB or Standard mode in the monitor settings. sRGB will not allow further adjust-

ments on some monitors, so Standard mode may be a better option.

A laptop computer may not have “monitor” adjustments but the video card utility software may offer similar settings (if available).

Standing near the test print, look back and forth between the monitor and the print comparing overall darkness and contrast. Start with the brightness setting on the monitor and try combinations of brightness and contrast to minimize the difference between the on-screen and printed version of the image. Try standing back further and closing your eyes for a rest occasionally to get a fresh impression.

On the test chart, below the numbers near the bottom, are faint grey squares inside both the black and the white background. Adjust brightness and contrast so that at least half the grey squares are visible against each background.

If the central B&W image of the test chart on the monitor seems to have a colour cast, possibly less “warm” than the print, then you may need to make small adjustments to the RGB colour settings on the monitor (if available) to attain a grey tone similar to the test print. For instance, reducing blue in the monitor settings will “warm” the image with yellow.

Windows and Mac computers both have a simple display calibration utility built into the operating system. The main benefit is to set the Gamma, which adjusts how dark mid-grey tones are. Search your settings for “Calibrate Display” and follow the instructions.

For Windows the free utility QuickGamma (quickgamma.de, click on the language button) is an easy way to adjust the overall Gamma and the Gamma for individual colours allowing you to remove colour casts as well. It creates a monitor profile and associates it with your monitor so this may undo the changes made using Windows calibration or other calibration tools.

If you want to delve deeper, the website agom.nl/lcd-test offers several monitor test images and detailed notes on the topic but I suggest keeping it simple using the procedure I’ve described here.

If your adjustment is correct your prints should come out looking closer to the screen image. You can tweak these settings as you compare future prints with the monitor but don’t focus on a single print or a specific colour if other prints generally look good. When you’re at that stage it may be time to buy a calibration device!

Tech Tips: What is ETTR?

by Richard James

“Expose to the Right” (ETTR) is a technique to maximize the amount of information recorded in any image. It is not new, it was introduced by Michael Reichman in an article on his website, Luminous Landscape, in July 2003 (luminous-landscape.com/expose-right) and reviewed again in July 2011 (luminous-landscape.com/optimizing-exposure).

In last month’s article, “The Science of ISO”, the key point was that if the light level in the shadows is below a recordable amount then there is no way of recovering information by boosting ISO.

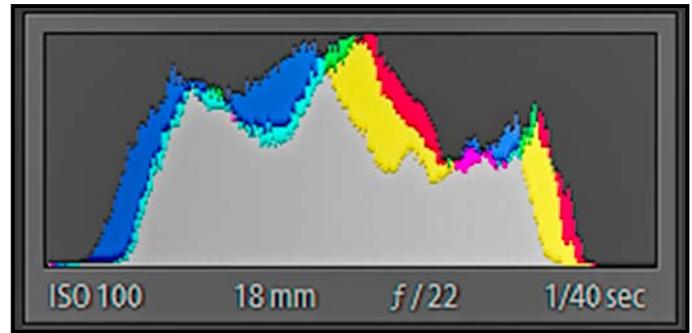
This is a brief explanation so some things are probably left for you to explore further. I am also assuming that you are saving RAW images with the intention of post-processing them. If you are shooting out-of-camera JPEGs and don’t intend to work on them then this technique may not give you a close representation of the scene.

Your camera’s exposure meter is calibrated to reproduce a mid-range neutral grey and give you approximately three stops of headroom before the pixels become saturated and cannot record any additional information in the highlights. Notwithstanding the extensive intelligence built into modern cameras the suggested exposure is often not optimal.

The examples usually offered are a white snowshoe hare in a snowfield and a black cat in a coal bin. In both cases the exposure will tend towards neutral grey which is clearly wrong in both cases. Compared to the meter reading the hare/snowfield image needs overexposure. But in the digital world, to capture the most data from the cat/coal bin image it needs even more exposure relative to what the meter suggests. This paradox is because digital images record half of the data in the top f-stop, decreasing by a factor of 2 for each lower increment in f-stop.

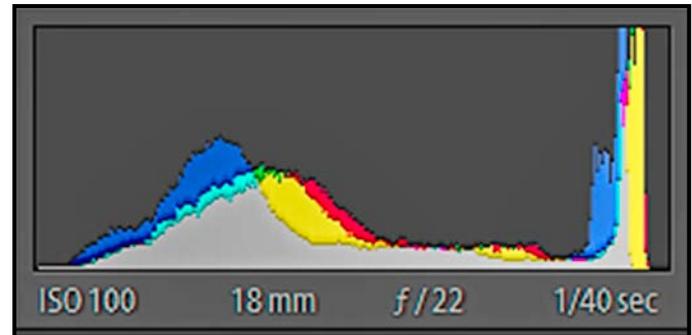
The concept is simple. Set the exposure so that the highlights are just not overexposed. Then, in post-processing adjust the image so that all tones fall within the range that they should be in the scene.

What this does is ensure that the highlights are captured as well as capturing as much detail as possible in the shadows before you hit the noise area and unrecordable light values in the shadows.



“Normal Metered Exposure”

In this histogram the camera meter exposure was used and you can see there is a gap on the right-hand side of the histogram where the highlights do not reach the edge of the scale.



“ETTR Exposure”

In the second histogram the exposure has been adjusted so that the highlights are almost overexposed and more detail in the low light values is retained.

To be successful with this technique you need to set the in-camera JPEG settings to neutral values as the histogram and image on the LCD panel are using the in-camera JPEG not the RAW file data. With this caveat in mind you can adjust the exposure until one channel of the RGB histogram is almost touching the edge of the display. You can also use the highlight warning to show where this is happening. It is critical to use the RGB histogram, not the luminance (white) histogram, as that is an average and will hide overexposure in a single channel.

When you are learning this technique, it helps to review the RAW image data using a tool like RawDigger (rawdigger.com) or FastRawViewer (fastrawviewer.com) that show the RAW data rather than the converted values in the image. You can see if you have any extra room available to increase the exposure slightly compared with what the JPEG data is showing in your camera.

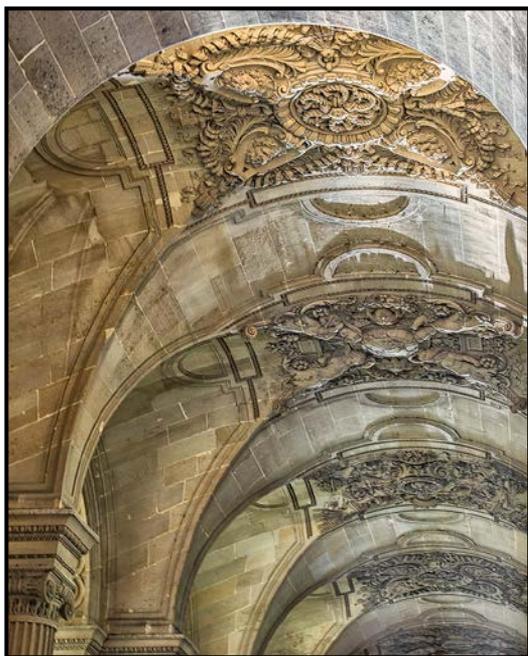
Once you have mastered the technique you will find that you have much more data available in the shadow and low light areas in your images. Now your challenge is to manipulate this data in your post-processing.

October Theme: “Arches, Alleys and Laneways”

by Lorna Zaback

This theme probably doesn't need a lot of explanation. Architectural images, street photography, and landscape shots highlighting narrow country roads would all fit in this topic.

It is possible that, over the next few months, our chances of capturing images like these intricately sculpted arches at the Louvre in Paris, or any of the magnificent rock formations in the southwestern US, will be slim.



“At the Louvre”

However, arches are familiar architectural features in Victoria, in churches, at the BC Legislature, at Craigdarroch Castle or the Empress Hotel, for example. Or, check out rose arbours or grapevine pergolas in the many gardens around the area.

Alleys are also common in Victoria, some of the most intriguing being in Chinatown. If you are contemplating shooting in Fan Tan or Trounce Alleys, possibly a couple of the most photographed sites in the city, go ahead, but maybe try for something different, a compelling street scene or an altered reality composition.

Laneways, winding and possibly tree-lined, through any of the region's parks or public gardens are also fair game. For location ideas, check out “Favourite Sites for Photography” on the VCC website home page. Explore, think outside of the box, and enjoy!

March 2020 Competition Judges

We sincerely thank our external judges for the March Intermediate and Advanced level competitions, Christina Craft, Dan Jones, Sheena Wilkie, Gregg Eligh, Rick Leche and Mike Byrne. We also extend thanks to our in-house Novice Judges: Pam Irvine, Lorna Zaback, Jill Turyk, Nicci Tyndall and Richard Webber. Images and judges' comments are available at: victoriacameraclub.ca/Competitions/CompetitionResults.aspx.

Christina Craft: Digital Wildlife. Christina started Funky-Town Photography in 2008 focusing on portrait and wedding photography and has won international and Canadian awards. She has a master's degree in journalism specializing in documentary and broadcast news. She won the best overall student award at the Western Academy of Photography and eventually joined the faculty.

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

Sheena Wilkie: Digital Theme. Sheena Wilkie is an enthusiastic participant in the global photography community. She is a passionate fine art photographer who enjoys sharing her knowledge and expertise with others. Sheena has been giving presentations and teaching photography and software courses for over fifteen years.

Gregg Eligh: Digital People. Gregg is a good friend to the club and well known around the club for his judging over the years and his interesting workshops. He currently teaches continuing education photography courses at Camosun College. Gregg's work can also be seen in several gallery shows every year.

Rick Leche: Digital Altered Reality. Rick currently lives in Black Creek, BC and is an avid photographer of anything or everything. He never leaves home without his Canon gear, whether he is traveling around the world or around the Comox Valley. Rick is a member of the Comox Valley Photographic Society where he and his wife Donna act as mentors in photo editing.

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



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Advanced People Digital - 1st
"Train Spotting" by Richard Webber

Judge's comments: Excellent image showing people in their best unselfconscious manner. Just being natural and straight forward. Good study of humanity.



Advanced Creative Digital - 1st
"Capturing Paris" by Leah Gray

Judge's comments: It plays with one's senses. The juxtaposition of old and new, the faded shapes and architectural details of old and new Paris and the image of a solitary viewer perhaps reminiscing about history. They all overlap and speak about some of the issues that we are now experiencing. Well done! I also love the splash of photographer red! Thanks for sharing!



Advanced Open Digital - 2nd
"Nets at Sunset" by Mark Sicherman

Judge's comments: This gorgeous, graphic silhouette carries the viewer away to some exotic, far-away location. The repetition of the fishing nets fills the colourful sky beautifully and gives us a strong sense of depth with their declining size. The setting sun is perfectly located on the horizon and adds such brilliant colour to the image. The use of a slow shutter speed adds a wonderful blur to the tranquil water.



Advanced Theme Digital - 1st
"Surfing, in the Air" by Don Peterson

Judge's comments: Great action shot with good focus and composition.



Advanced Open Print - 1st
"Here's Looking at You Sam"
by Christine Hutchins Gallagher

Judge's comments: This is a wonderfully expressive image. While I generally find such symmetrical composition a little lacking, in this case it works well, very much leading to the directness of the gorilla's stare. The handling of the black face, slivery hair and dark eyes is excellent. Nice work!



Advanced Monochrome Print - 1st
"Temple Stairway, Toyama, Japan" by Steve Barber

Judge's comments: Ultimately the true test of an image is its mood and impact. I find that this image has those in spades. On top of that I love the light on the stairs and the composition, they make the most of what otherwise might be seen as rather mundane subject matter. Great image.



Advanced Nature Print - 1st
"The Three Amigos" by Steve Lustig

Judge's comments: I love this image. The composition and the poses of the penguins are fabulous against a very simple background. It's dynamic, it's entertaining and has great impact.



Advanced Wildlife Digital - 1st
"Three Steller's Sea Lions Grooming"
by Daniel Rondeau

Judge's comments: This is an incredible image, on par with some of the images I recently saw on display at the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibit. I love the framing, that you took this from the perspective at the surface of the water, and the way the two animals are coming together with a triangle in your composition. I also love that this was taken in perfect lighting conditions giving it harmonious toning. Your choice of aperture means that my eye stays focused on the animals and there is nothing distracting in the background. I also appreciate that there is ample negative space to frame the subject. Really brilliant work!



Intermediate People Digital - 1st
“Lumberjack Ballet” by Judy Johnston

Judge’s comments: Lovely creative play with light. I’m not sure how much of this was literal and how much was controlled in post-production, but it makes a strong, graphic image. This shows creativity by the photographer.



Intermediate Creative Digital - 1st
“Love on the Glacier” by Grant Hughes

Judge’s comments: Another image that speaks to me about uncertain times (subliminally?). A picture of a modern young couple apparently contemplating life in isolation, on a rock, surrounded by ice, with a gritty cold background, but perhaps rising above it all to see the full moon. Thanks for sharing!



Intermediate Open Print - 2nd
“Winter Grasses” by Kim Smith

Judge’s comments: This is a compelling image owing to the simplicity of the scene. A well-trained eye caught this, well done. The limited depth of field works very well to draw the viewer’s eye to the main subject. The exposure for the difficult lighting situation has been handled well by the photographer by ensuring that highlights are not blown out.



Intermediate Open Digital - 2nd
“Glory of the Snow” by Lorna Shaw

Judge’s comments: Strong use of colour and depth of field in this image to accentuate the overall beauty of this floral scene. Well exposed throughout the image, so that no hot spots appear as distracting elements. This image earned a well-deserved second place award.



Intermediate Theme Digital - 1st
"Hanging on Overhead" by Ian Clay

Judge's comments: Great vibrant photo, full of action, definitely up in the air!



Novice People Digital - 1st
"Soul Sisters" by Joanne Couch

Judge's comments: A lovely, heart-tugging group portrait. Appropriately sharp focus on the girls in front of a softer, unobtrusive backdrop focuses our gaze on the subjects. You have skillfully taken advantage of the light to enhance their soft skin tones and to bring out the bright hues in their clothing. Great job capturing the trio just at this moment with one of them looking away and the little girl on the right looking so shy. Composition is good. Well done!



Intermediate Wildlife Digital - 1st
"Red and Yellow Barbets" by Gita McCormick

Judge's comments: First of all, this instantly drew me in. The symmetry is spectacular. What an incredible capture. I love that you keep my eye anchored on the subjects with your choice of a wide aperture, so nothing distracts my eye in the background. I also love that the branch leads my eye to stay on the subject. I also think a vertical composition suits this very well. An absolutely spectacular image. I adore this.



Novice Open Digital - 2nd
"Under my Thumb" by Ken McLean

Judge's comments: Wow, timing is everything. The bright gold/yellow colour draws our eye and a triangle is formed as the eye travels between the girl's top, the window and the bug's armour. Exposure and focus are good. The image is well framed.



Novice Wildlife Digital - 2nd (Tie)
"Beach Walk" by Wendy Clay

Judge's comments: This a great shot of two penguins, totally by themselves on a beautiful beach. The penguins are well placed in the image. They are in focus; the lighting is good and there is a foreground, middle ground and background. Beautiful colours. A story well told.



Novice Theme Digital - 2nd
"Galactic Gem" by Gwen Long

Judge's comments: This is a wonderful shot of a challenging subject. You have captured the beauty of the Milky Way and also managed a great composition as well. The soft water belies a long exposure. Well done.

Editor's Choice

An extra image selected by the Editors as there were no Novice Print entries this month.



Intermediate People Digital - 2nd
"In the Spotlight " by Vladislav Vasnetsov

Judge's comments: This is well framed and composed and your being able to catch that little pool of light is magic. We can see these two profiles which is the minimum to make this work. Good eye here.



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Member Profile: Bob Law

My photographic journey began in my late teens (several centuries ago). My first real camera was a Praktica SLR, an East German film camera. Next was the original Canon EOS film SLR. I used these cameras for many years for night photography and sports car racing photography at the old Westwood track in Coquitlam. Family and kids became more important for about twenty years when I shot mainly family/vacation events with a variety of point-and-shoot cameras, including an early Panasonic Lumix. During my 42 years as a commercial real estate agent, I did mainly architectural photography for advertising purposes but, in 2014, I bought a Nikon D80 with the idea of rekindling my interest in photography in preparation for retirement. Since then I have upgraded to a Nikon D850 and a D500 with a cabinet full of lenses and gadgets.



“Waiting for Dinner”

I am a “generalist” photographer with a leaning toward landscape, waterfalls, cityscapes, old buildings and machinery and birds (particularly herons), plus some sport photography such as the Swiftsure and my son’s and grandson’s cycle-cross races. A recent addition is street photography that I find both challenging and fascinating. I enjoy the Tuesday field trips, the Hornby and Tofino trips, and getting out in parks and in nature to discover new subjects. I find becoming totally immersed in a location or subject, such as graffiti, waterfalls, nesting herons, or a few days at Hornby Island or Tofino gives me the greatest satisfaction and produces some of my best images. My main goals these days are to read the light, get it right in the camera, and to improve my post-processing skills with Lightroom and Photoshop with a particular focus on black and white conversion.

The best photographic advice I have received was from Clive Townley and Steve Barber urging me to join the



“Mary Vine Falls”

Victoria Camera Club. I joined the Club in early 2016 and have been active in field trips and workshops. The Club has proven to be a wonderful experience with an amazing group of like-minded people. I particularly enjoy Members’ Night to see what everyone else is doing and how they are doing it. In 2018, to “give back” to the Club, I became a member of the executive as Vice-President.

In the past couple of years, I have been entering internal competitions, with somewhat mixed results. I think competitions are an important part of the Club and one of the best ways to improve my photography, so I will persevere.

I look forward to continuing to be active in the Club and bring my skills up to the level of the gear in my cabinet.



“Standing Guard”

Outside the Box

by Greg Samborski

“What camera did you use?” “Which lens?” “Your camera settings?” We’ve all heard and, probably even asked, these questions. While we need a basic understanding of how our cameras and lenses work, there are far more revealing questions we could ask such as “Why did you photograph that?”, “Was there a reason for that angle?”, and, “How many tries did it take?” These offer insights into the creative process and allow us to start improving our images without having to spend money on equipment.

Creativity is infinite and costs nothing to improve. Imaging technology has improved at an exponential rate. It’s easy to research which lens is sharper in the corners when an improvement in creativity would distract the viewer from a few blurry pixels.

So, here’s a challenge for you when inspiration and creativity don’t strike. I call it the One Camera, One Lens, One Light exercise.



“Storefront Area”

We start by imposing extreme limitations on everything but your creativity.

Time: Limit yourself to 20 minutes.

Confine: Restrict yourself to a very small space like a bedroom, car, section of beach, or the outline in the “Storefront” image.

Refine: Minimize your gear to one camera, lens and focal length.

Now, challenge yourself to capture as much diversity as possible inside that twenty-minute window. You have the option of making the shots completely unrelated (which is a good way to explore options) or you can try to connect them in a more editorial, story-telling style.

This is not the time to shoot 120 frames trying to achieve perfection so I limit myself to three frames of the same angle/pose/light/technique before changing. Think of this as brainstorming with your camera. You want to come home with as many ideas as possible. There you can axe what you don’t like and, if needed, go back and perfect the ideas that captivated you.

“So, what should I shoot?” Well, anything! You’ll probably feel stupid taking a photo of a Windex bottle on the workbench but then you notice a shaft of light coming through the window and place the bottle there. Then you might try picking it up and spraying it around with one hand while photographing it to capture the mist. Wow! Now the mist is back-lit by the sunbeam and the background has fallen to shadow!!! And you’re only just warming up.



“Vending Machine”

“Interesting... but really, Greg, I don’t want to take pictures of spray bottles, and the sun rarely shines here anyway, let alone into my windowless garage.” Then you need to choose a subject that connects with you. Try macro shots of bugs in your tulip patch; practice minimalist shots on the smallest beach access you can find; or document twenty minutes of your dog’s life in the car.

I adore portraiture so I frequently work with a fellow photographer, aspiring model or even a stranger for this kind of project. I realize getting together is not possible right now due to social distancing but you can always work with a family member, or even your cat.

These are just a few ideas to inspire you. In closing, I’ll leave you with the final step:

Redesign: Add your own modifications that focus on an aspect of photography you’d like to improve at such as limiting yourself to only shooting at night, resisting the urge to chimp, or adhering to off camera flash only.

You can see Greg’s work at: GregSamborski.com

Walk Around It

by Joseph Finkleman

I was 19, just starting my career as a commercial photographer. My first job was to haul gear from point A to point B. My employer, an experienced commercial photographer, had also been a working journalist and because of this, he was a consummate visual storyteller.

The job was an architectural image of a skyscraper. Before I was to unload the 4x5 view camera and 6 kilo tripod, he said, "First, we walk around the building from as far away as we can get. Then we move in a little closer and walk another circuit." In the end, we walked three complete circuits to find the best angle.



"Architecture"

The essence of all art forms, including photography, is storytelling. As a trained photojournalist, I had a fairly good idea of how to tell a story. But I didn't know how to fully research the story I wished to tell. This man taught me the importance of looking at the subject from every angle, not just physically but more importantly, from every angle of the story.

Every subject has a complex story. During my forty years of teaching photography, I have come up with a variety of assignments designed to teach students how to tell that story more effectively. I have found that most people do not want to spend the painful time needed to deeply learn one little aspect, then another little aspect, ad infinitum, until they have developed a deep and broad understanding of how to tell a story photographically.

Occasionally I would come up with valuable assignments that I would never dare to give out of concern that no one would complete them. This is such an assignment: You will need a camera, a pad of paper and a pen. Go

outside and use just one focal length, preferably a "normal" lens (50 mm full frame). Find the least interesting subject you can see which is at least seven meters from the door. Find the most interesting point of view of that subject and take that picture. Now put the camera aside and take the pad of paper out.



"People"

Draw a rough diagram of where the subject was and your point of view; label it diagram one. Explain in one or two sentences why you thought that was the best way to tell the story of that subject. (This is quite difficult for most people to do, so you have to work at it.) Then imagine every single other point of view that you could have chosen to photograph the subject and roughly diagram each one out. (For brevity's sake, simplify the number of possibilities and number each of them.)

Not only should you have at least eight possibilities at ground level all the way around the subject but, also eight at waist height, eye level, and drone level. Three levels of height from ground level plus two aerial views, times eight, plus one directly overhead, equals forty-one possible places one could position the camera. Subtract the one you chose. Now write out for each of the forty un-chosen points of view what reason would have made that point of view the best choice. What would have been the story of each of the other points of view?

One can easily see why I never gave this assignment to a class. However, I can guarantee that if you honestly work at doing this one assignment, you will learn more about storytelling in one or two days than you will learn in a decade of active storytelling.

Learning the purpose of story and also learning that every single thing, no matter how banal, has a myriad of possible stories is crucial to being a creative storyteller.

Photography Projects

by Evan Guengerich

Several years ago I somewhat spontaneously decided to begin a Project 365. In case you're not familiar with it, this involves taking a photo every day for a year. When I began the project, I didn't have a clear idea of what I hoped to accomplish. It just sounded like an interesting challenge, a combination of documenting my life and taking the best photo I could every day for a year. When I completed it, and I did take a picture every single day, I was a different and better photographer. As I reflect on it, I think it was a significant inflection point in my growth as a photographer and the reasons for that are much clearer to me now.



“Mule Train”

Most of us are creatures of habit. We tend to do what is easy and habitual rather than what will ultimately be most beneficial and fulfilling. As photographers we frequently go to the same places and photograph the same things using the same settings and techniques. Then we sit down to edit and move the same sliders we always use to end up with photos that look a lot like the ones we always take. That approach isn't bad and will result in gradual improvement over time, but planned and structured practice and learning can result in more transformational growth. A photography project can be a great framework to accomplish that.

As I define it, almost any planned set of photography-related activities with a specific goal is a photo project. You can google “photography projects” and get some

ideas, around 1.8 million ideas, to be more precise. The important thing to realize is that those are other people's ideas of a project. Rather than using what inspires someone else, which may not be relevant to your experience and goals, my recommendation is that you ask yourself some questions and think carefully about what you want to accomplish as a photographer.



“Rear View”

What type of photography are you passionate about? Would you like to learn specific skills? Do you want to work your way through the concepts in a photography book that's particularly meaningful to you? Or maybe you would rather create a book of family portraits, a series of black and white fine art photographs or a portfolio of cityscapes. Would you benefit from building your post processing skills through a series of training videos? Do you want to practice different composition techniques or maybe document an event or period of time in your life? Is your priority to just be more consistent with getting out to take pictures? There is no right or wrong project. It can be big or small and last for days or years. The



“Lydia on the Attack”

most important consideration is to make it one that inspires you and helps you to move forward in your photographic journey.

After deciding what you want to accomplish you can then put the specifics of the project together by building a specific plan in the same way you might develop a project plan for a work-related project. List the key steps that will get you to your desired outcome. Determine what you need to learn and explore the resources that are available. Think about the people you will want to involve and any travel you might need to do. Detail all the considerations and steps involved, whether few or many.

Considering the timing and pace of your project will be important to its success. How much time can you allocate to it given competing priorities and the nature of the project? Maybe you have a two-week period available and decide to spend a couple of hours daily for those two weeks. If you know your work or family schedule can be challenging, maybe allocating time each week over a period of months works better. Make sure the time commitment is realistic and sustainable given the realities of your life. Plan the time into your schedule. Set reminders on your calendar or put it on your to-do lists. Build some cushion into your schedule and give yourself permission to miss a few sessions to avoid feeling pressure or resentment when life gets in the way.



“Frosty Morning on Mesachie Lake”

The biggest challenge to completing a photography project successfully is usually having the motivation and discipline to make consistent progress. Your chances of success will increase with proper planning but realize that sometimes it will be difficult. You'll be too tired or competing priorities will intervene. Just aim for consistent progress over time and you will ultimately complete it.

My “Project 365” had two primary benefits for me. First, it made photography a part of my everyday life, which resulted in improved technical skills. Handling my cam-

era every day helped me get to know it better and I used it more intuitively and confidently. Second and more importantly, the project helped me learn to see things photographically.

Every day for a year I looked at scenes and objects around me trying to find an interesting photo in the normal and a story in the routine. I began to see those scenes and objects in terms of lines, light, shapes, contrast and balance. Some days, when the light of summer lasted long into the evening, it was easy. Other days, when I went to work in the dark and came home in the dark, it was challenging. At times I was pleased with my daily photo and other times I had to accept a weak photo as the best I could do that day but, by showing up for my project every day, I ultimately finished the year as a better photographer.



“Six Months of Sony”

What is my current project? I'm calling it Six Months of Sony. After shooting with a Nikon DSLR for years, I'm moving to the Sony mirrorless system. There's a steep learning curve to get to the point that using my new camera and lenses is intuitive and I can again focus on my photography rather than on my equipment. My objective with Six Months of Sony is to get out every week for six months and use my new gear, explore its capabilities and generate at least one compelling photo each week. That will give me a strong start at developing the familiarity and proficiency I need.

My favourite photography writer, David duChemin, wrote in his book, *The Soul of the Camera*, “Mastery can't be accessed via shortcuts, and it takes discipline just to stay on the path without taking the detours that are waved in our faces.” Our lives are busy and, as we fit photography into the spaces around other priorities, our tendency can be to do what is easy and familiar. By engaging in thoughtfully-planned activities and structured learning we can use our limited time to develop into better photographers. Taking on a photography project can be a great way to “stay on the path” in our journey forward. I encourage you to give it consideration.

How I Did It

Petals and Tendril

by Daniel Rondeau

July 17 started as a rainy day, leaving drops of water all around my backyard. That was my opportunity to try my new Nikkor 105 mm f2.8 micro lens.



The image is composed of three elements: the tendril is all natural, the sunflower in the background is a cut flower placed approximately 30 cm behind the tendril. Keeping the flower close allowed it to cover the entire background and to fill most of the water droplets. While there were natural drops of rain on the tendril when I first noticed them, those in the image are from a homemade solution of water and sugar. The sugar allows larger drops of water to hang on longer.

My Nikon D850 was mounted on a tripod, required because the final image is a composite of thirteen focus-stacked images taken at 1/100th sec, f11 and ISO 100. Using the focus-stacking mode of the D850, I manually set the focus to the closest drop I wanted sharp and chose the number of images to be taken successively. The camera then takes the shots, adjusting the focus between them according to the step setting I chose. I had to contend with a light breeze that moved the tendril, ruining several series of shots. Stopping down to f11 allowed a larger change in focus between frames and reduced the number of shots needed.

Individual images were loaded into Photoshop as separate layers and aligned (File->Scripts->Load Files Into Stack, with the automatic align option selected). They were then blended for focus (select all layers then Edit->Auto-Blend Layers, with the options Stack Images and Seamless Tones and Color selected). The resulting image was cropped and, only minor tonal adjustments and sharpening were applied.

Alter Ego

by Stephen Ban

Although at first glance, this shot looks like it was either a multiple exposure or composited in post-processing. In fact it was neither. It was all done in-camera!

The initial inspiration for this shoot was two-fold: first, the movie *Black Swan*, which depicts a ballet dancer's descent into madness as she auditions for a role and becomes unsure about what is real and what is fantasy. The second part of the inspiration came from a dance routine choreographed by Mia Michaels depicting someone's struggle with addiction, personified.

I already knew the perfect models for the roles, one depicting the "good", or light persona, and the other the "evil" or dark persona, and it helped that both the models had similar enough hairstyles and facial features to pass as almost-twins.



The lighting setup was straightforward: one Flashpoint XPLORE 600 Pro studio strobe set to multi-flash (stroboscopic) mode with an octobox approximately 45 degrees camera left with one flash occurring each second, for a total of five seconds, one continuous light with barndoors as a rim light and a simple black backdrop.

I then asked Paige (in white) to grab Addy's hands and throw them off, with a pose change after every flash, keeping the shutter open for the entire five seconds (Nikon D850, ISO 64, f13, Nikon 17-35 mm f2.8 lens set at 26 mm).

It only took a few takes to get the shot we were looking for, and for post-processing, all I needed to do was convert to black-and-white and adjust the levels a bit. Voilà!

Shoots Around Victoria

Witty's Lagoon

by Bob Law

Witty's is one of my favourite parks that I visit with my camera several times a year. It is a 56-hectare regional park in Metchosin surrounding Witty's Lagoon. The lagoon is a sheltered oasis overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca, in the farming community of Metchosin. The park is split into two main sections: Tower Point on the east side and the larger main lagoon section on the west, with Witty's Beach on the extreme west side.

There are over five kilometers of forest hiking trails, never far from the lagoon. When the tide is out, the lagoon is a huge salt marsh, teeming with wildlife. Over 160 species of birds have been documented in the park.



"Witty's Lagoon"

Tower Point: Access to this section of the park is via Olympic View Drive (off Metchosin Rd. to Duke Rd. West to Cliff Dr., GPS: 3934 Olympic View Dr.). There is a 500 m trail from the parking lot, through a scenic meadow, leading to a high rock outcrop with commanding views of Haystack Islets, Parry Bay and Juan de Fuca Strait. There is a small beach on the west side of the point with a rich variety of marine life in the rock pools revealed at low tide.

Witty's Lagoon: The easiest access to the Lagoon is off Metchosin Rd. (GPS: 4100 Metchosin Rd.), where the Nature Centre is located (open weekends and holidays 12 noon to 4 pm). The Lagoon Trail starts through an area of large Douglas firs and Big-leaf maples along Bilston Creek. Just down the first hill you need to decide between the 1.9 km Lagoon Trail on the left, or the 1.2 km Beach Trail to Witty's Beach.

The 1.9 km Lagoon Trail winds around the east side of the lagoon, past Sitting Lady Falls, Whitney-Griffiths Point (with washrooms, basic picnic facilities and a view-



"Sitting Lady Falls"

point here), the tidal flats and to Olympic View Drive.

The Beach Trail is a forest trail that skirts the shoreline, home to stunning arbutus trees that look like giant orange octopus tentacles that follow every direction except up and straight. There is a detour through the salt marshes and out to the sand spit, with the main trail terminating at Witty's Beach.

Witty's Beach: An alternative access is Witty's Beach Road (limited parking, go west from the main Metchosin Rd. parking lot, over the bridge and turn left), on Parry Bay. A steep set of stairs leads down to the gravelly beach. A sand spit that turns in to shallow tidal flat at low tide stretches over a kilometre toward Tower Point. It is perfect for swimming, sunbathing and beach combing.

You will want to plan several visits to the park, there is too much to see for just one visit.



"Gnarly Arbutus"

Imaging the Sky

by W. John McDonald

I love the sky. When I was a kid living on a small farm on the prairies, my older brother and I sometimes slept outside in the summer. We had a tent but preferred to sleep under the stars. I have never gotten over the feeling of awe that comes from seeing thousands of stars in the sky on a dark night.

In my teenage years I acquired a camera and soon after, set up a rudimentary darkroom. Photography, like the sky, has been in my bones ever since. Happily, these two interests fit together. Images of the sky can show not only what I saw as a child under a dark sky but much more as the sensitivity of modern cameras greatly exceeds that of the eye.



“Milky Way through the Trees”

Photographing the sky has its challenges but is intensely rewarding. The sky is full of fascinating subjects. There are constellations, stars and star clusters, planets, nebulae, galaxies, comets and, nowadays, even satellites and the International Space Station.

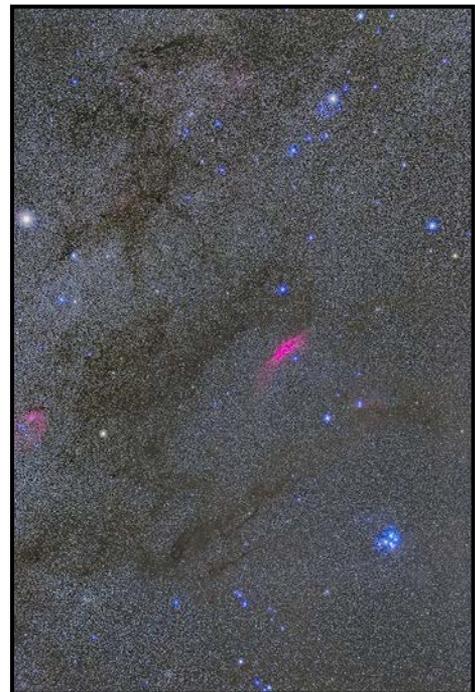
Getting started is not that difficult and some surprisingly beautiful images can be captured with just a camera and tripod. Constellations, star fields, planets, the occasional comets that come by can be photographed this way as well as striking images of star trails like the one shown in the next picture.

Using simple equipment is a great way to begin as one of the key challenges for anyone starting out in astrophotography is learning what is up there and how to find it. A good sky atlas will help you identify your subjects. Wide-field skylscapes are one way to get to know the sky and complement the more traditional binoculars and charts approach that visual astronomers use.



“Star Trails”

The next step is to add a simple tracking device that sits on top of the tripod and can move the camera to compensate for the earth’s rotation so that longer exposures can be taken. Without that, the apparent motion of the stars will result in star trails and blurring unless the exposure is quite short. With tracking and a wide to moderate focal length lens it is possible to take long enough exposures to capture quite deep images that show much more than the eye can see. It can be surprising to discover that an object in a long exposure wide-field image is actually a galaxy or that a patch of colour is a glowing nebula. The California nebula seen as a bright red object in this image is an example.



“California Nebula (red) and Pleiades cluster (blue)”

As you learn about these objects and how far away they are you realize the photons that are coming in to your camera can have been travelling for a long time. They are giving us a picture from the past. Even nebulae like the glowing red patch in the California Nebula image above are thousands of light years distant. The light

from galaxies that we see has travelled millions of years or more and takes us far back in time.

Once you discover how much is up in the sky you are likely to want to go further by getting a telescope and fitting your camera to it. This kind of astro-imaging is more challenging. The requirements for mount stability and accurate star tracking go up as the focal length increases.

Also, photographing dim nebulae and galaxies usually requires very long exposure times. This is usually done by combining (stacking) multiple exposures, each of which is as long as the equipment and skyglow will allow without showing streaking or fogging and can range from several minutes to hours. The image shown here required a total of 8.5 hours of exposure over several nights. Perhaps the most crucial equipment for this kind of imaging is warm clothing.



“Bode’s Galaxy (M81)”

For me, getting wide-field images of a section of the sky with some foreground in it to give a sense of scale is a great precursor to seeking out the tiny galaxies and nebulae that I capture with a telescope. A lovely image



“Milky Way over Ranch House with Andromeda on left”



“Andromeda Galaxy (M31)”

of a galaxy taken with a telescope means more to me when I can first locate the tiny target in a wide-field sky scape. The two images shown here are an example. The wide-field one shows the Milky Way over a ranch house with a small glowing patch in the sky on the left. That patch is the Andromeda Galaxy, the most distant object our eyes can see on a dark night. It is 2.4 million light years distant. When imaged with a camera attached to a small telescope the lovely spiral shape appears as in the second image.

Our solar system has interesting targets, too. The moon has much interesting topography to capture. For high magnification studies of planets, moon and sun special high-speed video cameras are often used along with software that selects frames with the least atmospheric disturbance for stacking.



“Planets, Moon and Sun”

I hope this brief introduction gives a glimpse of the rich opportunities that can be found in astrophotography and will encourage you to explore the wonder of the night sky with your camera.

For those interested, more information on how to get started is on my website: john.astronomers.ca.

Beginners' Corner: Handheld Photography

by Josée Ménard

As photographers we are all advised to venture out with our tripod. It is an essential tool for a sharp image unless you mean to creatively introduce camera movement into your composition. I am often out without my tripod. Why do I dare? Because I often shoot candid moments, street photography and wildlife. As you will read there is more to handheld photography than bracing yourself.

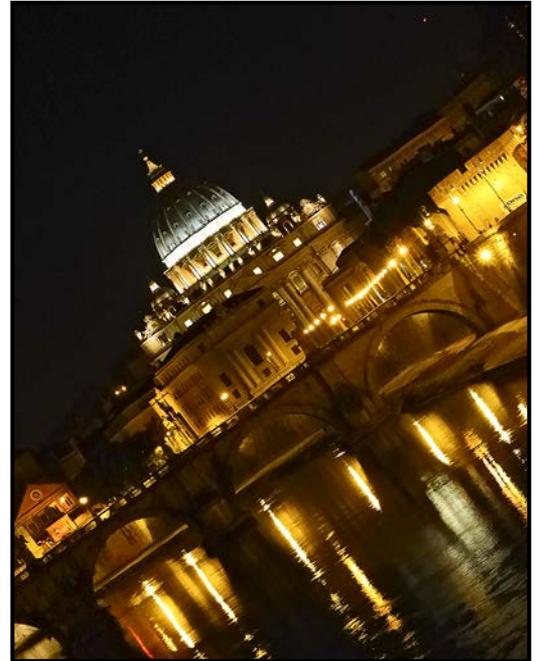
First we need the basic handheld grip. Slip on the camera strap. Place your right hand on the right side of the camera with the index finger at the ready near the shutter button and the thumb near the top right corner. The remaining fingers hold the right edge. Some cameras provide a molded bulge (grip) to guide them. The index finger and thumb work the buttons. The left palm supports the left side of the camera. The fingers hold the lens barrel while the index finger and thumb work its rings and buttons. How do you master this? Practice. Instead of reaching for snacks at commercials, reach out for your camera until holding it becomes natural, then add practicing with the buttons and rings.



"The Vatican Over the Tiber River"

The second requirement is your stance. With feet shoulder-width apart, straighten your back, relax your shoulders, and ready your camera. Elbows tucked into your ribs, exhale, hold it, gently press the shutter button. If you need more support, creatively transform your body into a tripod leg. For example, stabilize further by leaning against a wall, a post, or a tree. Sit or kneel and use your knee(s) to brace against it. You can position the camera on top of your backpack or the trail-mix bag on top of a rock. You might risk it all on the parapet of an old bridge in Rome as I did when I captured the Vatican in between

traffic lights. Then for fun, I matched the left corners with the center of St. Peter's dome and the embankment's edge. It worked and I left, happily with my camera.



"The Vatican At An Angle"

With the basics out of the way let's get technical. Depending on the exposure needed, increase the shutter speed or the ISO. The higher the ISO, the less light you need. Test your camera noise production at specific ISOs to know how much is acceptable to you. For lenses, a favourite is a 50 mm wide-aperture prime for images in low light. Primes are usually faster while zooms may need a slower shutter speed or higher ISO to compensate for their slower aperture. For portraits, plan for a faster shutter speed and spot focus on the eyes to keep them sharp. For landscapes, maximize the depth of field with an f11-18 aperture. Increasing the shutter speed can improve acuity.

For sharpness, play it safe. Unless you mean to creatively introduce camera movement set the shutter speed at or above the lens's focal length. Thus, for a 50 mm lens, keep it at or above 1/50th second and so on. Do not forget the crop multiplier (i.e. 1.5x, 2.0x etc.) if your camera has a crop sensor. Lastly, do not forget to set the image stabilizer to "on" to reduce vibrations.

Handheld can be great for panning and blurring the background while focusing on a moving target. Set shutter speed priority and track the subject in the focus frame until it passes you.

Lastly, it has been a pleasure to contribute to the Beginners' Column for the past three years. Now it is time for me to pass the keyboard along to another volunteer writer. Enjoy your photography!

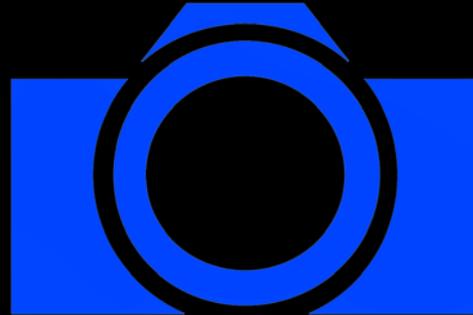
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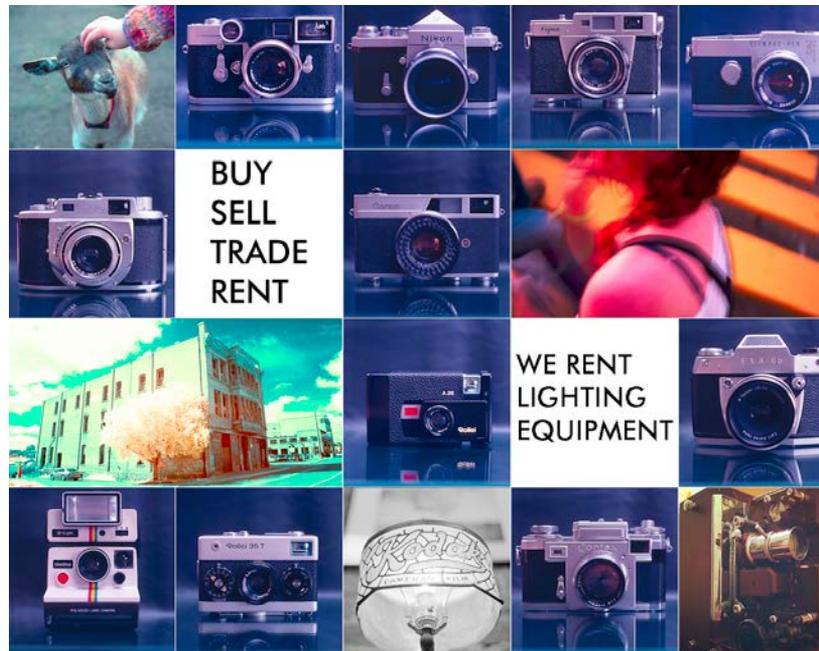
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