

THE CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA



The Newsletter of the Camera Club of Central Minnesota

Volume 8, Issue 6

1 June 2016

Club Meetings and Other Bits of Information

The Camera Club of Central Minnesota has decided to meet on different days in order to provide access to our meetings for more people. We will be alternating between a Thursday of one month and a Monday of the following month at the Public Library in St. Cloud from 6:45 to 8:45 pm.

The club has monthly photo topics, image sharing and critique, hands on demonstrations of photographic gear and software, member online gallery links, discussions about photography, and is open to all.

The monthly topics for the next few months are:

Thursday, June 9, Bremer Community Room 104: Construction

Outdoor Portraits

Outdoor portraits can be some of the most pleasing to view because the natural light and the surrounding environment make for a gorgeous image that's pleasing to view. The trick is to understand what camera settings are most likely to get you the quality portrait you seek in any given lighting situation.

Even without knowing exactly what the lighting conditions will be like when the day of the shoot rolls around, there are a few key settings you can dial in before you pack up your gear and head to the shoot location.

Since a shallow depth of field is typical of most portraits, you can preset your aperture to a wide value, like $f/2.8$ or $f/4$. Shooting this wide will give you the nice, blurry background that is so pleasing for portraits while keeping your subject nice and sharp. Use aperture priority mode to have total control over the aperture while letting the camera make the decisions regarding shutter speed. That's just one less thing to worry about!

Another setting you can pre-plan is ISO. Naturally, you'll want to minimize the ISO to control noise, so ISO 200 is a good choice. In

addition to minimizing noise, ISO 200 allows you to utilize a shutter speed that's fast enough to avoid camera shake and compensate for any movements the subject might make while the shutter is open.

Also set your camera to single shot autofocus with single-point metering, assuming that your portrait subject will be stationary during the shoot. This allows you to depress the shutter halfway to focus, and all you have to do is select which autofocus point your camera meters from, and place the autofocus point over the subject's face and take the shot.

Depending on the lighting conditions during your outdoor shoot, you might need to use the exposure compensation feature on your camera. If the background is too light, you will need to dial in positive exposure compensation, like +1 or +2, to ensure that the subject isn't underexposed. The converse is true if the background is darker than your subject: dial in -1 or -2 of negative exposure compensation to ensure your subject isn't vastly overexposed.

Another setting that might need some adjustment is white balance. While you might begin with cloudy conditions, as time passes, the clouds might dissipate and the sun might come out, requiring you to use the daylight setting or move to a shady area and use the shade setting. Naturally, you can use white balance for creative purposes as well, and utilize them to suit your aesthetic tastes rather than adhering to strict usage according to the type of lighting that is present.

Be prepared to pull out your reflector set or a flash to provide some fill light, especially if the lighting conditions are harsh, such as direct, afternoon sun. Using a reflector will help you bounce the light onto your subject, which helps soften the harsh shadows that result from the daytime light. Similarly, a flash can provide fill light to reduce harsh shadowing.



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The Camera Club of Central Minnesota

What Is Truth In Photography?



**WE MANIPULATE
PHOTOS ALL THE
TIME, OFTEN TO
THE EXTREME.**



Recently, one of the most well-known photographers in history was caught in a Photoshop scandal. Naturally, this begs the question: where is the line between truth and manufactured reality in photography?

Steve McCurry needs little introduction. He's an absolute master of the craft. His famous photo, "Afghan Girl," was named the most recognizable image in the history of National Geographic. He has won the Robert Capa Gold Medal. Kodak asked him to shoot the last roll of Kodachrome ever produced. He's had the career of 50 photographers.

And so, it was inarguably strange when recently, an Italian photographer, Paolo Viglione, noted a rather obvious digital manipulation in one of McCurry's prints at a show in Italy.

Clearly, a sign was moved, else it would have blocked the man seen next to it, arguably detracting from the balance of the composition. There are also other issues, such as the bricks making up the columns of the building not aligning properly, while the column on the right actually overlaps with the frame of the car in the foreground. In a statement given to PetaPixel, McCurry noted that much of his recent work was shot for "[his] own enjoyment," and he would define his work today as "visual storytelling." Regarding this specific error, he attributed it to a mishap in his studio while he was

away and noted that changes had been made to prevent such an event from occurring again. In the meantime, other people quickly found such manipulations in other photos, though these have yet to be addressed.

The problem, of course, is not that the manipulations were made. We manipulate photos all the time, often to the extreme. Anyone who claims not to manipulate photos is either lying or giving away their raws. We must remember that anything, anything at all, that modifies a capture in a way that makes it less faithful to reality is a manipulation. Is cloning a sign to a different location in the photo a manipulation? Yes. How about dodging and burning? How about just a global contrast adjustment or a slight saturation boost? How about even something as simple as an exposure adjustment? I would put it to you that in every one of these cases, the answer is: yes, it's a manipulation.

What Is Real?

So then, the logical extreme is that a straight-out-of-camera image is the only true representation of reality, yes? Not a chance. The way a camera represents color, its dynamic range, etc. — all of these parameters differ from those of the human eye. In fact, the human eye works less like a camera than you think. So, arguably, the only real way to get an accurate representation of reality would be to edit a shot to be exactly as the eye saw it. But then, we'd be relying on

memory, which introduces its own biases. Then, you might argue, one must edit in real-time, by getting the camera settings just right to create an image that exactly mimics reality at the scene, so they could check the results on the back LCD against the actual reality before them. Would that finally be a real image, devoid of manipulation, representative of the true existence that lies before the photographer's eyes? Of course not. What your eyes see is not what another's eyes see. Physical variations mean we all see the world a little differently: my yellow is not your yellow. Vision itself is not real; it's not a tangible thing. One cannot point to something and say, "this is vision." It's merely a process; it's our brains' representation of chemical reactions to a very narrow band of the electromagnetic spectrum. What about all those wavelengths we don't see? What if Descartes' Demon is real? There is no absolute image; nothing is the "real."

Now that I've gotten that unintentionally nihilistic-sounding aside out of the way, we have to redefine the term "manipulation," because there are no manipulations if there are no absolutes. It seems, rather, that we wish to define a widely understood definition of "manipulation" that captures an essence of intention, rather than visual qualities, but the problem is that we can't infer intentions with certainty, so we must resort to those visual qualities. Part of

the NPPA Code of the Ethics states:

While photographing subjects, do not intentionally contribute to, alter, or seek to alter or influence events. Editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and context. Do not manipulate images or add or alter sound [referring also to video] in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects.

It seems straightforward enough, until you dig deeper into it. What is the "integrity" of an image? As we just saw, "manipulate" is a dangerous word. But as you can see, the admonishment ends with an essence of intention: don't "mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects." But we do that before we even snap a picture. When you put on a telephoto lens, you're deliberately excluding content from an image to funnel attention to a subject. Is this misleading a viewer? And what of "content" and "context?" What is the context of an image? Is it the immediate environment around the subject? If I take a photo of a homeless man, what is the context of the image? Well, if I'm trying to represent poverty, surely, it's the surroundings he lives in. Should I stop there? Perhaps, if by institutional failings, he has been brought to this place in life, the context is the city whose laws and lack of support system put him there. But perhaps that city requested federal funding for such programs and was denied it. Is the context then the entire country? What is the

"context," the sum total of that which brought that which could be to be that which is? Photography, by its very nature as a frozen slice of an otherwise temporally continuous world, lacks "context." Richard Feynman was a master at deconstructing the idea of the absolute:

What Do We Accept?

So, if we acknowledge that there is no absolute, the best we can hope to achieve is an agreed upon set of standards that constitute the "manipulation" merely by majority or by authority. The NPPA's definition is problematic; so, let's look for a set of rules that outlines specific techniques that are disallowed. Here's what the Associated Press has to say:

The content of a photograph must not be altered in Photoshop or by any other means. No element should be digitally added to or subtracted from any photograph. The faces or identities of individuals must not be obscured by Photoshop or any other editing tool. Only retouching or the use of the cloning tool to eliminate dust on camera sensors and scratches on scanned negatives or scanned prints are acceptable.

Minor adjustments in Photoshop are acceptable. These include cropping, dodging and burning, conversion into grayscale, and normal toning and color adjustments that should be limited to those minimally necessary for clear and

accurate reproduction (analogous to the burning and dodging previously used in darkroom processing of images) and that restore the authentic nature of the photograph. Changes in density, contrast, color and saturation levels that substantially alter the original scene are not acceptable. Backgrounds should not be digitally blurred or eliminated by burning down or by aggressive toning. The removal of 'red eye' from photographs is not permissible.

Though still problematic, this is better. But again, we can ask, what constitutes "normal" or "authentic"? When does toning become "aggressive"? You may accuse me of pedantry, but I would put it to you that the inherent nebulousness in these definitions is the same sort of nebulousness over which laws are fought over or philosophies fall; one need only examine legislature to see how difficult these issues can be. Nevertheless, let us focus on the first paragraph, as it's more pertinent to the specific case at hand and arguably more readily graspable

"Only retouching or the use of the cloning tool to eliminate dust on camera sensors and scratches on scanned negatives or scanned prints are acceptable." There it is. We needed to move away from intention and simply present our "frame of truth" upon which rests the realm of what is a manipulation and what is not. So, did McCurry manipulate the images? Yes, if you accept the AP standard.



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The Camera Club of Central Minnesota

What Is Truth In Photography (continued)



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The Problem

There's only one issue, however. McCurry defines his work as "visual storytelling," the implication being that he has moved away from strict photojournalism into a realm of fine art. Well, in that case, he's not subject to the above guidelines, unless he was working in a photojournalistic capacity, which does not seem to be the case here. Savvy readers have noted other cases of these manipulations, though as mentioned, McCurry has yet to respond to them specifically.

The problem then is one of expectation. McCurry has a reputation as a photojournalist, and that reputation begets the expectation that his work follows the commonly agreed upon standards of photojournalism. The question remains, however: is that is it his issue or ours? Is he somehow bound to follow those guidelines or at least make it abundantly clear when he doesn't? Or is his work truly "his" and thus

bound only to the conventions he subjects himself to?

Furthermore, in this case, he has noted that the mistake was an issue at his studio, implying that he was unaware of it and would not have approved of it if he had been.

The Question

So then, we have to ask ourselves just what it is we're asking of Mr. McCurry before we assert that he violated it. We even have to ask ourselves if we have the right to ask those questions. If he is not working in a photojournalistic capacity, is he obligated by some imperative, moral or otherwise, to follow photojournalism standards simply by virtue of his reputation? If he had started a separate company called "McCurry Fine Art Images" and this work had fallen under that umbrella, would he then be justified? Should he even be held responsible, since he asserts that the error was not his and that he was unaware of

it? Do we have the right to hold him to those standards? If so, what is the obligation that makes Steve McCurry beholden to his audience?

I don't claim to have the answers to these questions. I certainly have opinions on them, but I'm reticent with regards to such matters, as the ability to cross from opinion to assertion requires a certain amount of authority, and certainly, I do not claim to have the photojournalistic authority that a person such as Steve McCurry has. Nevertheless, he presented these images for an audience — an audience that now claims to be affronted by the manner in which the photos were presented. And thus, they, as an audience, should have a say in the matter of the implicit contract between them and the performer on the proverbial stage. So, I put it to you: what are the answers to the above questions? What is right in photography? What is truth?



Wide Angle Lenses Usage

When you're in the mood to grab a lens and go out shooting, what's your first choice: a macro lens, a telephoto lens, or perhaps something long enough for bird watching?

Or maybe a wide angle lens?

If you're someone who en-

joys working with a wide angle lens but haven't been happy with the results you've been getting, or if you're interested in getting started with wide angle photography but feel you'd benefit from a little background information, the following primer will assist you in getting to know and making the

most of wider focal lengths.

What is a Wide Angle Lens

The terminology has nothing to do with the physical dimensions of the lens; "wide angle" is a reference to a lens' field of view. A telephoto lens is said to have a narrow field of view; it is used to bring dis-

tant subjects closer.

A wide angle lens, in contrast, has a wide field of view; it captures significantly more of a scene than a telephoto lens.

A 14mm lens, for instance, can “see” much more of a scene than a 200mm lens is capable of. A lens with a focal length of 35mm (full frame) or less has traditionally been classified as wide angle.

What is a Wide Angle Lens Good For

In short, any lens has the potential for a multitude of applications. How you choose to use a given lens is often a simple matter of your own creativity. However, certain types of lenses do indeed excel at specific tasks.

One of the most common uses of a wide angle lens is for Landscape Photography.

The world is quite a big place, decorated at every turn by intriguing, breathtaking scenery. It's not that a telephoto lens would be entirely inappropriate, but it would limit the breadth with which you could capture the sweeping majesty of a landscape. Of course, there's still only so much that even the widest wide angle lens can capture but, for landscapes, wider is usually better. A wide angle lens is what you'd use to convey the grandeur of a rolling mountain range or the vastness of a windswept wheat field.

To learn more about awesome Landscape Techniques with a wide angle, this guide by Kent Dufault will really help you out: *The Complete Landscape Photography Guide*. With the heavy reliance on wide angle lenses in landscape photography, this

will give you the information you need to get the results you want.

But taking photos of landscapes isn't the only use you might find for a wide angle lens. They also work for architectural photography (both interior and exterior).

You might also find a wide angle lens useful for photojournalism, where the idea is to capture scenes as they are, as they unfold; it is about the people as well as their environment. In order to capture both, you'll often need a relatively wide view of things.

A wide angle lens can also be used for portraits, with a few very important caveats that will be discussed below. Using this type of lens effectively can yield some extraordinarily unique portrait work.

Know When to Get Close

Naturally, one's first inclination is to stand back from a scene and use a wide angle lens to take in all the “bigness” that a telephoto lens can't accommodate. This, of course, is how you might photograph a sunset over a lake; there's a lot to see and you need to be able to capture it all. But wide angle lenses are also capable of reproducing small details. This is why there are times when you'll want to get as close to your subject as possible. The closer you get to your subject, the larger it will appear in the frame, thus creating unique perspectives and more impact.

Make the Foreground Count.

This is closely related to the previous tip. The viewer always needs a point of reference, especially when shooting nature scenes that are somewhat uniform in texture or color. Whether it is a person or a tree or a rock formation, you need to make sure your scene includes an anchor of sorts, something familiar to the viewer that they can use to determine a sense of scale.

Go Hyperfocal

If you shoot scenes, you'll typically want to have as much depth of field as possible. Getting all of your beautiful scenery in sharp focus will give your shot the impact it deserves. In order to accomplish this, you must focus your lens on the appropriate point that will provide the greatest apparent sharpness across the frame. This is known as hyperfocal distance. There are a number of software solutions and apps that help you determine where to focus your lens after you input the focal distance and f-stop you're working with. DOFMaster.com has solutions for iPhone, Android, Windows, and Palm OS, in addition to an online calculator and a hyperfocal chart.

Beware of Erratic Lighting.

When you are capturing large swaths of both sky and land, you will likely run into some lighting issues that you otherwise wouldn't have to deal with. Shooting at a wide angle means you may have a wide range of light occupying the frame; depending on the conditions of



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Better Memories Through Photography



CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA

Membership is \$25 per year. Members should provide: Email Address, Mailing Address, and Phone Number.

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The Camera Club of Central Minnesota publishes a monthly newsletter which is distributed via e-mail. The newsletter will contain information about up-coming meetings, summaries of previous meeting, recommendations for photographers, announcements of photographic workshops, and other material that seems appropriate.

If you would like to send suggestions, comments, or other communications concerning the club or newsletter, please send your e-mail to rheath@tds.net.

the area you are shooting, it is possible you will be faced with different qualities and quantities of light all at once. In such situations, you won't be able to simply take a shot and be done with it. In order to balance the foreground and background and ensure the many elements in the scene are correctly exposed, you'll need to make use of graduated filters or polarizers or take multiple exposures. Yes, it's extra work but these usually aren't problems that can be properly corrected in software. It's important to get it right in camera.

Beware of Distortion.

Another major characteristic of wide angle lenses: distortion of the perceptible physical characteristics of objects. If you're not careful — or at least aware of it — you will be in for some big surprises when shooting with a wide angle lens. One scenario in which distortion is particularly noticeable is when shooting something with straight lines or edges. A wide angle lens will render those straight edges as bent (recall the lens aberration known as barrel distortion, for exam-

ple). Wide-angle-related distortion is also very apparent in portraits. Because objects closer to the lens appear larger, noses will be quite exaggerated — not the desired look for headshots, that's for sure. But a wide angle might be useful for environmental portraits, where you include the person and their surroundings to tell a story. You can pull this off by getting up close to a part of the body or scenery that is closely connected to the person (an arm or leg, for example). The face will be farther away and will appear less distorted.

Wide angle lenses can be a challenge to use effectively and correctly, but learning good technique will allow you to easily incorporate wider focal lengths into your photographic arsenal. These lenses have far more uses than the landscape shots they are typically associated with.

Just be aware of distortion issues and put some thought into composition - it's likely that you find working with a wide angle lens can unleash a new wave of creativity. The fun will outweigh the challenges.

