

THE CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA



The Newsletter of the Camera Club of Central Minnesota

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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 public library has been closed for the past three months due to a fire in the building. But it is to be opened on Thursday, 3 November. Thus, we will be able to meet again as the Camera Club of Central Minnesota.

Monday, November 7, Bremer Community Room 104.

Monday, December 12, Bremer Community Room 104, "Christmas Party" Print and bring your best photos of the year. You are welcome to bring images from the past three months of subjects:

- ◇ SEPTEMBER – State/County Fair – Carnival
- ◇ OCTOBER – Rain/Reflection
- ◇ NOVEMBER – Travel

Photographing Faces in Portraiture

One of the biggest problems that everyone faces in portraiture is making chins look good. Peter Hurley and other photographers tell you to direct portrait subjects to push their neck out just a bit. That works all the time, but another trick that also works well is making sure that the positioning of the chin is at the right elevation to begin with. This trick is a bit more complicated and requires you to "see light" so to speak.

Bringing the chin down more towards the

chest squishes the area below it and therefore also makes a person look less flattering. Always have the subject bring their chins up just a bit. But to avoid having the scene look like they've got their nose in the air, have them stick their neck out a tad and place their face slightly off to the left or right.

Generally, I suggest that everyone faces the main light source in your scene if you're working with off-camera lighting.

Images that leave an impact

Take a moment to think about the most famous photo you know. What made you choose that picture? Think of another equally powerful one. What made you choose that image? Come up with an additional five.

Were they all black-and-white, color or a combination? Were there emotional ties to any? Were any of family members? Were they of a specific genre—for instance nature, news event or portrait?

Were there commonalities among them—things like dramatic light, strong composition, impact, saturated color, etc.?

The reason I asked the above questions is to get you to think about why certain images leave an impact. We will then follow up in future newsletters what the factors are and how we can apply them in our photography.



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Distance and Focal Length



The old mantra that “the camera adds 10 pounds” isn’t entirely off base, depending on how you’re shot. As photographer Dan Vojtech highlights, your focal length and distance from your subject can dramatically affect how they look.

The reason for this has to do with the way cameras compress space in a certain focal length. If you use a short focal length like 20mm, you have to be very close in order to focus properly. From this distance, the tip of a person’s nose may be several times farther away than the backs of their shoulders.

If you’ve ever seen the Lord of the Rings, you might be

familiar with how this distance can affect how body parts are perceived. Simply put, the farther away from the camera an object is, the smaller it looks. This is the same trick they used to make full-size Elijah Wood seem Hobbit-sized while standing next to Ian McKellen. By the same token, if your subject’s nose is the same distance from the camera as their shoulders are from their nose, their shoulders might start to look smaller. This can compress the face and body to look smaller than it is (and, consequently, probably make the nose look bigger).

On the other hand, if you use a longer focal distance, you’ll need to be farther away

from the camera in order to make a proper shot. This can make body parts start to overlap and seem more compressed, but it can also accentuate certain body parts. If you’re shooting a few feet away from your subject, the inches between their nose and their shoulders won’t seem as far apart, so their proportionate size will appear different to the camera.

There’s no “correct” focal length or distance to shoot from, so you can’t just pick one for the most flattering shot, but it’s something you can toy with while you take pictures.

...IF YOU USE A LONGER FOCAL DISTANCE, YOU’LL NEED TO BE FARTHER AWAY FROM THE CAMERA IN ORDER TO MAKE A PROPER SHOT.

Shooting Layers in Street Photography

Recently I’ve been trying to add more complexity to my work— to shoot more layers. Shooting in layers is more challenging than single-subjects, and requires more visual gymnastics, and luck.

Below is a brief guide on how to shoot layers in street photography — and why you might want to try it out:

Why layers?

The reason why you should try to shoot layers in your street photography is because you want to take your work to the next level. I think it is a fun challenge, where you can create images that are more complex and interesting.

I personally am drawn to single-subjects in photos. I like

minimalist photos, but being here in the north, I want to capture more layers to show more of the chaos of the streets.

Find the right background

First of all, you need to find the right setup. Meaning you need to be in an environment where there is a decent amount of foot traffic that will allow you to create layers in your street photography.

If you’re shooting in a downtown area, try to stand on the far edge of the curb, and shoot towards the storefronts. Find a sidewalk with enough space and depth so you can practice shooting layers.

Bus-stops are also a good place to shoot layers (people aren’t moving, and you can get very close).

Layers, deconstructed

A basic example of layers in street photography:

- **Foreground** The foreground is what is closest to you.
- **Middle-ground** The middle-ground is what is a little further away from you.
- **Background** The background is what is furthest away from you.

To make an effective layered street photograph, you want something interesting to be happening in each of these layers.



Also to note, you can create layers in street photography with 2 layers, or even 4-5 layers.

Also by adding negative space around the subjects and objects in your frame, you will add more depth. You want to try to avoid overlapping figures.

Example technical settings for layers

In terms of technical settings, I recommend to focus on the subject the furthest away, which will give your photos a deeper illusion of depth.

Here is an example setup:

- Aperture-priority
- f/8
- ISO 1600
- Manual-focus (pre-focused to 5 meters)

This setup works well with manual-focusing lenses, especially rangefinders. Or with Fujifilm cameras, or any other camera that has a poor auto-focusing system.

By focusing to 5 meters (pretty far), you can have more depth in your photos.

Or you can always just keep your camera in “P” mode, ISO 1600, and center-point autofocus (what I usually recommend for micro 4/3rds cameras, because the autofocus is really fast). And when you’re using autofocus, just try to focus on what’s furthest away in the background.

Find “anchor” subjects

When you’re shooting on the streets, you want to find “anchor subjects” — subjects that aren’t moving.

For example, in the background you might see a guy smoking a cigarette. That

person is your first “anchor” (because they probably aren’t moving around much).

Then you want to identify a second anchor (another person a bit closer to you in the foreground). This second anchor might be someone checking their phone.

Lastly, you want to add someone to the foreground (closest to you). In my experience, it is hard to find 3 subjects that are anchor subjects and aren’t moving. Therefore the subject in the extreme foreground tends to be someone walking into and out of the frame.

For the person in the foreground, you want them to be out-of-focus. Why? This gives you an illusion of depth.

Newbies tend to always focus on what’s closest to them in the frame (in the foreground). But the more advanced you become as a photographer, you spend more time focusing on things in the background (furthest away from you).

Color or black and white?

You can of course shoot layers in color or black and white. Color tends to be easier for layers, because it helps separate your subjects. Black and white is harder for layers, because the elements blend in more together.

But of course, it is personal preference at the end of the day. Try both, and see what works better for you.

Shoot in good light

Also if you want very ef-

fective layers, you want to shoot in good light (sunrise, sunset, or ‘golden hour’).

This is because you can create more black shadows, dramatic contrast, and the light really brings your images to life.

So either try to wake up early and shoot sunrise, or shoot at sunset.

Another thing you can experiment with is shooting with a flash. This works especially well when you are shooting during the day, and the light is harsh and flat. The flash creates more contrast in your images, and more separation between your subjects (especially when you are shooting in the shade).

Fill the frame

As you get more advanced and experienced with shooting layers, you will try to fill the frame (and avoid overlapping subjects).

As a fun assignment, try to fill the frame to the brim without it becoming too chaotic. Always play that line between having enough people in the frame and not being too busy.

Also as a tip, try to focus on filling the edges of the frame. As photographers, we tend to tunnel-vision too much in the center of the frame. If you focus on the edges, you will get cleaner compositions, better framing, and more interest.

Book-ends

Another thing to consider when creating layers is to add “book-ends” to your frame.

What is a “bookend” in the context of street photography?

Well, it is to have a subject or element in the extreme left or right of the frame, which



WHEN YOU'RE SHOOTING ON THE STREETS, YOU WANT TO FIND :ANCHOR SUBJECTS, — SUBJECTS THAT AREN'T MOVING.



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Shooting Layers in Street Photo... (continued)



draws the energy of the frame closer together.

For example, you can have someone's face extremely close to you, which will fill up the entire 30% of the left or the right side of the frame. The good thing about this technique is that it removes distractions from the background.

Shoot a lot

Lastly, shooting layers is hard. A lot of capturing the right layers in a street photograph is luck.

So you need to shoot a lot. Alex Webb says street photography is 99.9% failure. I agree with him, especially when it comes to shooting layers.

You might shoot 1,000 photos and still get no good layered photographs.

But the more photos you shoot, the more likely you are to hit a home run.

Things to avoid when shooting layers

When shooting layers, try to

avoid the following:

- **Overlapping figures:** You want to have a little separation between the subjects and elements of your photograph. For example, it isn't appealing to have a hand or a limb growing out of someone's head in the background.
- **Extremely bright objects:** Avoid white cars, white plastic bags, and other distractions in the background. They tend to draw attention away from the subjects in your frame.
- **Not shooting close enough:** If you want good layers, you need to be pretty close to your subjects (in the 1.2-3 meters zone). If you feel that your layers aren't edgy, dynamic, or interesting enough get closer. Also as a note, if you're starting shooting layers, a 35mm lens (full-frame equivalent) is a nice balance of being wide enough, yet

not too wide.

Layers for layer's sake?

When it comes to street photography, adding layers will add more interest to your photographs.

Yet remember— don't shoot layers for layer's sake. Anyone can add multiple subjects in a frame and not have them overlapping.

But ultimately you want a photograph with depth of emotion. Try to capture multiple subjects where you have multiple gestures, body languages, and emotions. See if you can create a layered street photograph with some people who are happy, and some who are sad. Try to photograph in one frame— both old and the young. Big and small.

Juxtapose different elements in a layered photograph (both compositionally and emotionally) — and you will make a great street photograph.

ONE DESCRIPTOR THAT YOU NEVER WANT TO HAVE ATTACHED TO YOUR NAME IS TO BE KNOWN AS THE "CHEAP PHOTOGRAPHER".

Five Reasons to Raise Your Portrait Prices



You get what you pay for. In most cases, this saying rings true. However, there is another narrative playing out in the photographic world. This other, rather untold story has a central character getting much, much more than what they pay for. When it comes to portrait photography, clients are reaping rewards from photographers who are un-

willing or too fearful to raise their prices. There comes a time when something other than a photographer's livelihood must give.

Your Reputation

Like most vocations, your photography business is built upon reputation. Without a solid reputation, your career as a photographer is destined for failure. More than

likely, you already have a reputation in your service area. Clients and fellow photographers alike recognize and label you. Hopefully, you aren't immediately associated with low prices. One descriptor that you never want to have attached to your name is to be known as the "cheap photographer." Believe it or not, undervaluing your services can have a counterin-

tuitive reaction. Clients see rock-bottom prices and will recognize that you have little value as a photographer.

On the other hand, the “competitive rates” you have established will attract a slew of clients. However, the clients you will attract will not value you as a photographer or the art that you create. Soon, clients and industry peers will recognize you as the “discount option,” and this reputation will be hard to overcome. By raising your prices, you distance yourself from the economical option. Far away from rock-bottom prices, you establish value for your service and show that your experience, artistic vision, and technical prowess are worth your rate.

You Aren't a Work Horse

Too much work is a bad thing. You aren't built to put in 60, 70, or even 80-hour weeks. Long, grinding hours are not sustainable and leave photographers mentally and physically exhausted. Low prices are the quickest way to inherit this unsustainable grind. Depressed pricing attracts customers who consider budget over everything else. While these cost-minded clients do bring photographers a small payday, they also refer new clients with similar values. Soon enough, you will have a steady stream of meager-paying jobs but will not have the time to do much else with your life.

While higher prices for each portrait session might result in less work at first, you will still maintain your same annual bottom line with less effort. Use simple math. The average annual income for a portrait photographer in the United States hovers around

\$50,000. If a photographer raised their prices by a modest 20 percent, their new income would reach sixty thousand dollars. While this extra cash will by no means make you rich, the extra income will provide you with the flexibility to work less hours and increase free time to spend with your family, relaxing, or working on your craft.

Consumer Confidence

Professional photographers realize how their clients feel when being photographed. The last thing you should want your client thinking during a session is about how they do not trust you as their photographer. It is a photographer's goal to make their clients relax in the knowledge that they are in great hands.

Higher prices will inevitably lead your customers to have confidence in you. If a client pays dearly for your service, they have confidence that your work will live up to its price. With consumer confidence high, your client will not doubt the decisions you make before, during, and after your portrait session.

Raise the Industry Standard

As a portrait photographer, you can immediately name the photographer down the road that is willing to shoot for hours, deliver heaps of high-resolution images, and only charge pennies-on-the-hour for the whole package. Many photographers fall into the trap of lowering their prices to compete with the photographers who undercut their services and lower the value associated with the portrait industry.

At first, lowering your prices to compete with the competition seems like a good idea. However, this logic is flawed and is counterproductive to your goals as a career photographer and to the industry at large. Clients use pricing comparatively and create pricing anchors. If all photographers have deflated rates, consumers enter a mindset where little value is attached to photography services. Considering this, photographers should collectively raise prices. Instead of lowering your rates to meet the low end of the market, do all in your power to raise the standard for the entire industry.

Career Longevity

No one said that starting a photography business was going to be easy. Starting a business is one of the most challenging endeavors you can face as a creative. In fact, many professionals don't last in the field because of financial uncertainty. By increasing your prices, you are gaining an edge against the odds and positioning yourself as a staple in your market.

Knowing that you are receiving a decent wage for your work, you will be more likely to show up for your portrait shoot motivated and full of excitement. With fresh energy, you are more likely to create better work that will, in turn, attract the clients you have always desired. With increased revenue, you will soon be able to pick the projects that deeply interest you and will add years to the lifespan of your photographic career.



THE LAST THING YOU SHOULD WANT YOUR CLIENT THINKING DURING A SESSION IS ABOUT HOW THEY DO NOT TRUST YOU AS HIS PHOTOGRAPHER.





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.

Portrait Prices (continued)

In Conclusion

Most photographers choose their career because of a deep passion for the craft and a calling to create beautiful images; financial prosperity is just an added bonus. But somewhere along the way, a shift towards full-client rosters became paramount. Photographers are now quick to gobble up any client they can get and actively price their products based on arbitrary anchors.

Many photographers forget that the business of photography isn't all about clients. The photo business is also about you, the photographer. By raising your prices, you will be able to hold your head up high and approach your work with renewed energy. With higher prices, you will create a sustainable business model. In a world where every Tom, Dick, and Jane is a photographer, elevate yourself by asking for a fair wage.



Using the Lightroom Graduated Filter

Reaching for the sky in photography isn't some overly cheesy metaphor — it's something photographers should take literally. The sky can often make a photo stand out with billowy clouds, dark storms, or even vibrant colors. The trouble is, shooting the sky is tough to do — in most cases, the camera is incapable of capturing both the bright sky and the much darker subject in a single frame. Traditionally, photographers have turned to graduated neutral-density (ND) filters, or more recently, high dynamic range (HDR) photography. But, both methods have their shortcomings. Thankfully, where ND grads and HDR fail, Lightroom's graduated filter tool can sometimes salvage a boring sky.

While it's not a tool that will prompt photographers to leave their physical graduated ND filter at home, it's pretty powerful regardless. Here's how to expand your photo-editing prowess with the Lightroom graduated filter tool.

When to use Lightroom's graduated filter tool

Lightroom's graduated filter is a great tool for photographers — but like any digital effect, it's not infallible. So when should you use it? First, if you can use a physical graduated neutral density filter, do it. Graduated NDs are the original inspiration for the Lightroom tool. NDs reduce the exposure, but only in part of the frame. That makes them an excellent tool to avoid overexposing the sky in bright scenes. The problem is that NDs only work with straight (or fairly straight horizons).

HDR, or taking multiple exposures of the same photo and merging them together later, is one workaround. But, HDR doesn't work with moving subjects. And when you just want to add a subtle enhancement to the sky, HDR can be overkill.

