

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** will be meeting on the first Monday of each month with the second Monday of the month as back up starting in January 2017. We will meet 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.

Assignments

Monday, February 6, 2017, Bremer Community Room 104. The assignment is: *Artificial Light*.

Monday, March 6, 2017, Bremer Community Room 104. The assignment is: *Winter — snow, ice, outdoor sports, etc..* Janice Springer shared some incredible images from India and will be presenting a full image set and talk about her experiences there at our March 2017 Meeting.

Remember, all your photo assignments and meeting dates are online at

<http://cameraclubmn.com>

Ambient Light

There's a lot to love when it comes to ambient light. Though photographers have a plethora of artificial lighting tools at their disposal, very rarely does photo gear live up to natural sunlight. Often times, sunlight diffused by clouds or bounced softly at a certain angle even makes people look a bit better. This isn't to say that natural light is without its own set of difficulties to overcome. In fact, many novice photographers avoid shooting with natural light because of how problematic it can sometimes be in creating a well exposed image.

Sometimes the best results come with a balance of both ambient and artificial light in a scene. We will go over a few balanced light examples, as well as some tips on achieving similar results in your own photography:

If you'd like to allow more ambient light into a shoot featuring artificial lights, here are a few technical adjustments that can make a significant aesthetic difference.

The more narrow the aperture you work with, the more your artificial light will drown out any natural light infiltrating the composition. Darkened backgrounds create a narrow, spotlight-esque look for foreground images, further eliminating naturalism from photographs.

Fast shutter speeds naturally allow less light to reach a camera's sensor. By keeping the shutter open for a longer amount of time, it's possible to get a brighter photograph with a higher ratio of ambient light.

Sometimes, making adjustments to the shutter speed or aperture of an image simply isn't an option. In these cases, a higher ISO can be used to bring in more natural light. However, photographers should be wary of digital noise becoming a distraction should they opt to make ISO adjustments.

Many photographers are surprised by how straight forward incorporating ambient light into an image can be. The next time the images you make in the field aren't turning out quite right, don't pain yourself by fiddling with clumsy strobe or continuous light settings and angles. Instead, take a moment to make some changes within the camera itself – to your surprise, you may find that a simple change makes an incredible difference in color and tonality!



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The Camera Club of Central Minnesota

Boosting the Depth of Photographs



WHATEVER YOUR SUBJECT, THE FRAME ACTS AS A WAY TO PROVIDE PERSPECTIVE THAT ENHANCES THE FEELING OF DEPTH.



One of the obstacles that all photographers face is figuring out how to make their images look less two-dimensional and more three-dimensional. Of course, this is easier said than done because, unlike our eyes which see everything in 3-D, our cameras can only muster 2-D.

However, there are some tricks you can use to try to boost the depth of your images. And, by doing so, you can make your images appear as though they have greater dimension than they actually do. Let's review six of our favorite tricks for doing just that.

Leading Lines

Perhaps the most straightforward method of adding depth to your photos is to incorporate the use of leading lines. This is a particularly successful technique when shooting landscapes, but works well for photos of cityscapes, street scenes, and architecture too.

When "leading lines" is mentioned, many people likely envision a straight line, like a fence in a landscape, or converging lines, like train tracks. And while these lines certainly fit the bill for adding dimension to a photograph, leading lines don't have to be straight.

Consider a photo of a winding road and note how your eye follows it from the foreground to the background as it snakes its way across the landscape. Note as well that the tall, thin trees that line the road help to further de-

fine the lines, making them that much more visually impactful. The result is that there is a greater connection between the foreground, midground, and background, and the photo has greater depth.

Why it works: Leading lines help give an image a sense of movement because the lines direct the viewer's eye from one area of the photo to the next. What's more, lines can help draw attention to the primary subject. Either way, because the viewer's eye follows the line, the image has a feeling of being more expansive and having more detail than it might have had at first glance.

Framing

Framing your subject involves including an element in the foreground of your photo such that it surrounds your primary subject. This technique can be used in a variety of photos, from portraits to landscapes, wildlife to abstracts. Whatever your subject, the frame acts as a way to provide perspective that enhances the feeling of depth.

Imagine an image of an ice cave. We can immediately see how the frame within the frame helps give the photo improved dimension. The size of the ice cave's walls in relation to the skier in the background indicates just how far away the skier really is. The texture of the walls in the foreground also give us a sense of depth because of the way that the ridges in the

ice cast shadows. Notice as well how the frame would force your eye deeper into the shot, which, again, indicates greater depth.

Why it works: By incorporating a frame into the frame, you add an element that helps draw the viewer's eye into the shot. Because frames are placed in the foreground, the image has a greater sense of dimension because the frame is so prominent in the scene and the primary subject is smaller in comparison. This difference in size helps give the photo the visual depth it needs to appear more three-dimensional. Additionally, the frame helps the viewer feel as though they are inside the photo rather than merely looking at it.

Point of View

The perspective from which you shoot can determine the level of dimension in a photo. For example, if you stand straight up and take a photo from your eye level, an image might feel flat because of a lack of foreground interest to draw the viewer into the shot. However, the same shot taken from a kneeling or laying position - which helps incorporate foreground interest - can have much more depth as a result.

Consider shooting a field of pumpkins. In the image of the pumpkin field, the low shooting angle helps the viewer understand how far the field extends into the distance. This is because in the foreground the pumpkins

are relatively spread apart, but as the distance mounts, the pumpkins appear to be much closer to one another, which indicates depth. Additionally, since most people are familiar with the average size of a pumpkin, it's easier to understand the dimension of the shot as the perceived size of the pumpkins gets smaller and smaller the closer they are to the background.

Why it works: Using a low shooting position capitalizes on the same principles as using leading lines and a frame within a frame. By adding foreground interest, you not only give viewers a more unique perspective from which to view the scene, but you also provide them with interesting visual elements that begin to draw their eye into the shot.

Connect the Foreground, Midground, and Background

In many cases, particularly if you're photographing a landscape, your images will have foreground, midground, and background elements. To help enhance the impression of depth, it's important that these elements not exist in a vacuum, but rather be visually connected in some manner.

Whenever you shoot a landscape, note how there are distinct zones - the plants in the foreground, the valley and buildings in the midground, and the mountains in the background. But, note how each is visually connected. The inward slope of the foreground funnels your attention toward the buildings in the midground. From there, the lines of the roadway push your eye to the mountains in the background.

Why this works: By connecting the three layers of an image, you help move the viewer's eye through the photo. That is, the foreground draws the viewer's eye inward and leads them to elements in the midground (where the primary subject is often placed). From there, the midground, if connected in some way to the background, further moves the eye along deeper into the photo. Therefore, the effect of connecting the foreground, midground, and background is much like the effect achieved with leading lines - it helps give a sense of depth because it

forces the viewer to move their eyes around the photo.

Shadows

One of the primary elements that influences the quality of a photo - any type of photo - is the lighting. Good lighting can make a photo; bad lighting can ruin it. But what's often overlooked is the value of the shadows created by that lighting.

When it comes to conveying depth, there are fewer tricks that are easier to use than shadows. You can see this principle at work. Though the image is quite simple with a lot of negative space and muted colors, it still has tremendous depth because of the shadow details cast in the foreground and background that frame the primary subject. *Why this works:* Whether shadows are cast toward the foreground, toward the background, or to the side, they make an otherwise flat scene appear to be more three-dimensional. Shadows can be dramatic as well, giving the photo more excitement and helping viewers find more interest in the scene.



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Photo Ideas: What Should I Photograph?

Rainy day? Stuck at home? Few spare hours? Bored? But your camera is within your reach, you love photography and want to practice your photo-taking abilities. There is just one thing standing in your way - you have no idea what to shoot. No problem at all - as here are few ideas of

things you can photograph at your house and garden.

Food-o-graphy

Vegetables, fruits, sauces, pasta, desserts... take out whatever you have in your fridge and place it by the window as a side or back natural light is the key. You

can also take photos of actions in the kitchen while preparing food, but if are not a good cook - no worries, order a pizza and take photos of it. Remember, a lot can be learned about lighting by doing food photography.



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Photo Ideas (continued)



ANOTHER COOL PHOTOGRAPHY IDEA IS TO CAPTURE RAIN DROPS ON WINDOWS OR WATER DROPLETS ON GLASSES AND PLANTS.



Plates and cutlery

Everyone has spare plates and cutlery lying around in the kitchen. Position only plates, or only cutlery or make a combination of both in an unusual, evocative way. Imagine storylines involving them and illustrate those stories from start to finish by moving the objects in different directions.

Consumer products

Shoes on shelves or in your hands closed or opened perfume bottles, clothes on hangers or on the bed, wrist watches, wall clocks, toys, jewelry and the list of consumer products that are in your house goes on and on. If you keep their original boxes, even better – you can play with them as well, as long as you think outside the box. The number of objects in your house you can shoot is only limited by your imagination.

Things on the floor

A big vase, a candle holder, an antique, a potted plant or even your sleeping baby can take the center stage in the middle of your floor and be photographed from above. You can be as creative as you want with different objects and shooting angles.

Portraits and self-portraits

It doesn't matter whether you shoot a self-portrait or portraits of people currently in your house, nor whether you show happy or sad emotions. You can create a simple portrait studio at home and experiment with

different poses and expressions of your subjects. If the people in your house are camera-shy, then just focus on their hands, feet, lips, silhouette or anything else that captures that person without showing their face.

Animals and insects

If you like animals, here is a challenge for you. Photograph your pets or your neighbour's pets, the fish in your aquarium, the insects on your window sills, the bird in the tree outside your window or flying over your house. If you have an aquarium or terrarium at home – you don't need an underwater camera, just use a polarizing filter to be able to cut out the glare on the glass.

Water drops

Another cool photography idea is to capture rain drops on windows or water droplets on glasses and plants. A variation on this topic would be to have the water drops on portable small items frozen in the freezer. You will have only a short time to shoot them before they melt but that would add the excitement and increase your focus on extreme close-ups. After the droplets melt and combine they will create fascinating patterns on the dry surface.

Street life outside your window

The everyday life right outside your window can be a theme for many photo projects. For example, shoot the ever-moving clouds, mystical sunrises, magical sunsets, busy road workers, random

passing strangers and cars. Take your tripod out, set your camera to take single images or time-lapse and always be mindful not to take photos of people's faces without their permission first.

Garden photos

Flowers, fruit trees, vegetable plants or even grass – all of them can be reasons for colourful and unique series of narratives. If it has been raining for days and no beautiful flowers are available in your garden – then check for worms, insects or wild weeds. Beauty can hide in the most unsuspecting things.

Fun with photos

If you have photo prints or photo negatives you no longer wish to keep or you can print duplicate photos, you can either burn parts of them or poke holes and shine light through them and re-shoot them. You can also cut and fold them in different ways from unusual angles to create dramatic photographs.

Have fun with any or all of these 10 ideas and really go after it. Give yourself a mission to try them out at the first moment you feel like wasting time and find the beauty that is often overlooked – photography has the power to bring out your creativity.



Shoot Into the Light

Everything is better with backlight. That's a lesson I learned 20-plus years ago shooting sports, and I put it to use today for everything from tabletop food photography to portraits and events. Why is backlighting so great, and how do you work with it?

Edge Separation

That lesson I learned 20-something years ago was about edge separation for enhancing the illusion of depth. When working outdoors, by putting the sun behind the subject and adjusting the exposure for the shadow side of the subject we're now facing, you create a thin band of light along the edges of the subject — whether that's a soccer player or a senior portrait — which serves to distinctly demarcate the edges of the subject, enhancing the feeling of depth. In the studio, the same technique can be done with strobes and strip softboxes placed just behind the subject and just outside the frame, or by using gridded spotlights well behind the subject. Be sure to place them above shoulder level to keep from creating a strange shadow on the subject's cheeks and neck. To create a very thin edge light, hide the source directly behind the subject and it will illuminate a thin outline around them.

Shooting Outdoors

Place the sun behind the subject and adjust exposure for the shadow side of the subject you're now facing. This creates a thin band of light along the edges of your subject, enhancing the feeling of depth in your photo.

Enhanced Texture

One of the benefits of lighting from behind is that it casts shadows toward the camera. Even if they're off-axis by nearly 90 degrees based on a light position nearer to the side of the subject rather than behind, still there will be the appearance of enhanced shadows falling generally toward the camera. And anytime you increase shadows like this, you're also increasing the appearance of texture. Even when used with a soft light source such as a cloudy sky or a strobe in a softbox placed opposite the camera, the position of the light is enough to rake across the surface of your subject—the grass in a field or the nooks and crannies on old weatherworn wood—and create the shadows that tell our eyes about texture. If you're trying to maximize texture, work to position your light close to the same plane as the surface you're illuminating. The more you're shooting into the light, the more pronounced texture will appear.

One benefit of lighting from behind is that it casts shadows toward the camera. By increasing shadows like this, you're also increasing the appearance of texture.

Frontal Fill

If you find that the subject is too strongly backlit to expose correctly just by opening up the aperture or slowing down the shutter speed, you may need to add a frontal fill light to decrease

the contrast ratio in the scene. This can be done with a softbox on a strobe or a simple white or silver reflector. However you decide to do it, be careful not to overdo it. A lot of the charm of backlighting comes from prominent, deep shadows presented toward the camera. That charm is all but eliminated when the frontal fill is too strong. So my technique tends to be increasing the fill until it's noticeable on the back-of-the-camera LCD, and then backing it off by a third or a half stop to ensure it's not too bright. A little bit of frontal fill goes a real long way.

Adding frontal fill to decrease the contrast ratio in a scene can deliver beautiful results.

Watch Out For Flare

Whenever you're shooting toward any light source, the biggest challenge is avoiding lens flare. Flare robs shots of saturation, contrast and sharpness. Sometimes it sneaks into the frame even though you can't see the light source with your naked eye through the lens. Other times the source is distinctly in the shot. In either case, you'll need to take care to avoid problematic flare. This task is made easier with the use of flags, or by strategically positioning the camera so that existing structures such as trees create temporary flags by blocking direct sunlight from hitting the lens. Another option is simply to go with the flare and make it part of the compositional elements in the picture. This



ONE BENEFIT OF LIGHTING FROM BEHIND IS THAT IT CASTS SHADOWS TOWARD THE CAMERA.





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.

Shoot Into the Light (continued)

trend has increased in recent years, as flare is now seen as a hallmark of candid, authentic, off-the-cuff photography. So if you want to add a bit of "realism" to your picture, consider strategically letting the light source creep into the frame for flare.

When shooting toward any light source, the biggest challenge is avoiding lens flare. One solution is to make the flare a compositional element of your photo.



What Attributes Cause You to Like a Photo?

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. I will share several common traits that make great photos that leave an impression.

rise and sunset. It's warm in tone, low in the sky and lasts but a short time. It provides depth with strong shadows and highlights. It provides three-dimensionality in a two-dimensional medium. Add in a few strategic clouds and the skies light up in color. The clouds become compositional elements. The color is short lived, so work fast. If there are storm clouds on the horizon opposite the sun and contain moisture, a rainbow may appear. It's times like this when you look to the heavens after a session and thank the weather gods.

Dramatic Light

To me, light is the single most important characteristic that makes or breaks a picture. I'll be the first to admit that there are others that run a close second, but dramatic light often leaves a viewer saying, "Wow." To add credence, another tag line of mine is, "It's better to photograph a mundane subject in great light than an amazing subject in terrible light." The best light appears at sun-

Good Subjects

A tree, is a tree, is a tree — right? Not when you're a photographer! Certain trees have more character, shape, lines, color or other attributes that make them stand apart. It's true that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but photographically, it's essential the photographer is selective and chooses the subject that provides impact. Compare a wilted flower to a perfectly shaped specimen, the photographer wanting a great image will point his or her lens toward the fresh bud. Combine a good subject with great light, and the results can be stunning. If the light lasts long enough, change lenses and zoom in to be more selective.

