

THE CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA



The Newsletter of the Camera Club of Central Minnesota

Volume 10, Issue 6

June 2018

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.

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

<http://cameraclubmn.com>

Assignments

Monday June 4, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, Sports: Any of the traditional sports or it could even be a rodeo.

Monday July 2, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, Flowers: Formal gardens, wild-flowers, close-ups, still life, etc.

Monday August 6, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, National, State, or Local Park – spend a day or part of a day photographing. Select five photos.

Monday September 3, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, Sports: Any of the traditional sports or it could even be a rodeo.



Inside this issue:

CLUB MEETING AND OTHER BITS OF INFORMATION	1
NOTES FROM THE APRIL MEETING	1
THE GRANDEUR OF TREES	1
WHEN TO SHOOT WIDE	3
MONOPODS	4
WHAT IF ITS BEEN DONE BEFORE	5
CREATIVES	6

Notes from the May Meeting

There were several members that shared their photos and received feedback from the rest of the club members. In particular, Bruce Reagen showed his photos taken on his trip to several locations. While the photographic trip was enjoyable, we all learned a few techniques in picture taking and shared our views with Bruce on things that we would do to modify the photos.

Then, our historian photographer showed and discussed several pieces of three-dimensional viewing hardware. He showed the early gear from View Master up to the View Master gear that had sound capability.

We then had a discussion concerning future club meetings. A couple of new attendees joined right in to the concerns and discussion.

The Grandeur of Trees

Trees invoke a sense of timelessness and grandeur. Most species grow for many centuries more than humans ever will — so let's make trees look the part, with these tips on capturing them with a wide-angle lens.

The Inspiration

I've just finished watching The Lord of the Rings for the 12th time, so I'm sure that's had some influence on my creative process. I am

definitely inspired by the cinematography of the late Andrew Lesnie, responsible for many of the atmospheric imagery found in Peter Jackson trilogies. Then there's Magic: The Gathering; a collecting card game set in a fantasy world. The artwork displayed on these cards often boasts crazy perspectives and interesting points of view. Occasionally, I'll bring some cards for inspiration along on workshops in forests, before instructing stu-



The Camera Club of Central Minnesota

The Grandeur of Trees (continued)

dents to shoot the forest canopy.

The Best Trees for the Job

Of course, then there's the challenge of actually finding trees that match the inspiration. I prefer beech trees because of their stature, maturity potential, and often ominous-looking branches. But the latter can also be photographed well if your subject is a gnarly oak. The broadleaf woodland is the area you'll want to explore for this type of photography, but in some parts of the world, spectacular variations on the genre can be found. Like bristlecone pine in the southwest United States, for example. On a recent exploration in Glen Feshie, Scotland, I found the silver birch equally fit for the job. The tree I found to shoot rose from the edge of a dark mixed woodland. With the sun shining slightly through the clouds, the atmosphere was perfect.

Finding Epic Trees Online

Everything can be found online these days — even the diameter of trees around the globe. MonumentalTrees.com is a huge database of the most stunning trees that are still around. At present, there are 28,597 trees documented, ranging anything from a couple of meters to ~30 meters in circumference. The website features an interactive map, helping you explore the area digitally before heading out to the forest prepared.

Catch the Rays

The most ethereal atmospheres can be captured in the right conditions. But did you

know that it doesn't even have to be misty to catch those mystical rays? Godrays (which are actually called crepuscular rays) can be found in the forest occasionally, but it depends on the amount and height of the foliage blocking the sun. At about two hours after sunrise, when the sun barely rises above the shrubbery, the slightest amount of moisture from the night before gets burned off: that results in a fleeting moment of foggy conditions, in which you can photograph those elusive shafts of light peeking through the leaves.

Go Low

There's a whole set of challenges involved when you shoot trees from a frog's perspective. My first piece of advice is to get close enough to the tree, so that you're barely able to focus at minimum focus distance. This really creates a distorted view, because objects like plants, roots and flowers in the immediate foreground can appear larger than the actual subject of the tree. The goal is to have an interesting foreground, with a bright background.

Focusing and Exposure

The first challenge is to get everything in sharp focus. The easiest option is to set the aperture on your wide-angle to f/22, while aiming for a third into the frame. But as diffraction at that aperture prevents you from getting sharp results, I want to stress that focus stacking is the best tool to get engaging images. In aperture priority mode, dial in an

aperture of about f/6.3 and turn (yeah, manually) the focus ring all the way towards the minimum focus distance.

Judge the exposure (darker is better), take note of the settings and set the camera to manual mode at those settings. You can boost the ISO to counteract the swaying of leaves in the foreground. When the image is exposed correctly, you can then turn the focus ring further away and repeat. Do this 4 to 8 times, depending on the focal length of the lens you're using. Diagonal fisheyes are done with 4 shots at f/6.3, while 30mm lenses benefit from an additional 4 exposures.

It took nine shots to get the result I wanted. Because of the fern swaying in the wind in the foreground, I chose f/4 to shorten the shutter speed.

Reviewing

With your camera pointed upward, you can't judge the image unless you either dig a hole to put your head in and view the screen, or omit dirty hands and get a camera with a tilting screen. I use the Canon XS50HS at the moment, but this camera only makes reviewing the image accessible when shooting a horizontal orientation. Quite often in vertical orientation images, I still guess at the composition and start the focus stack after a quick look by turning the ballhead on the tripod, but leaving the legs in position.

Key Points

Here's my best advice for



MY FIRST PIECE OF ADVICE IS TO GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE TREE SO THAT YOU'RE BARELY ABLE TO FOCUS AT MINIMUM FOCUS DISTANCE.



Volume 10, Issue 6

ethereal-looking pictures of trees:

A wide-angle lens works best when you get up-close-and-personal with your subject. Get low, close, and point up for dramatic impact.

Getting close involves challenging focusing situations.

Learning to focus stack overcomes the limitations of technology and yields the sharpest results.

The best time to photograph is shortly after sunrise, when the sun climbs above the tree line and helps to dissipate moisture from the night before.

A camera with an articulating screen makes sure you don't alter the composition between judging the exposure and the start of a focus stack.

Go ahead and explore MonumentalTrees.com to explore epic trees in your area.



When to Shoot Wide

If I were shooting portraits on a desert island and could only take one lens with me, it would be hard to leave my 70-200mm behind. After picking up a Canon SX50HS for a trip to Germany, though, I've found myself using it more and more often when I have people in front of my lens.

So, why pick one over the other? Composition with a wide angle is certainly more limiting due to the distortion it creates, but it also opens up a new way of looking at someone. A wide lens can get you out of trouble, set the tone of an image, and shake up your perspective.

Shooting in a Confined Space

It may be the most obvious reason to change focal lengths, but sometimes a long portrait lens just can't get you where you want to be. For this portrait shoot, I had only intended on photographing the gentleman on the left, but as we were about to wrap up, he called in his associate to join him. Already backed up against a wall with my 50mm, my only option for adding a second subject was to go wider. By carefully composing the shot to minimize dis-

ortion, shooting this portrait at 35mm worked out beautifully. Anytime I go on location for a shoot, I keep a 35mm or wider on hand just in case.

Give a Sense of Place

One of my personal rules in portraiture is to keep the background simple and draw the focus to the subject. I break my own rules all the time. As I was talking to the woman in the image (a furniture designer) she told me the story about how she managed to get the sign behind her and how important it was to her. I knew I needed a shot that was still about her, but used the sign to tell her story. Wide angle to the rescue. Besides being in a small room, I wanted the shot to emphasize the grandiosity of the half-ton chunk of metal behind her, and shooting at 16mm let me exaggerate it as much as possible. By placing her in the middle of the shot, it makes the background an extension of her; so, even though she's small in frame, she still feels dominant.

Create Intimacy

One of my favorite uses for a wide angle lens is perhaps the most counterintuitive. Giving the viewer an intimate connection to the subject is usually the job of a long lens,

but at 35mm or wider, you can really get up close and personal. Finding the balance between proximity and distortion can be difficult, but try using your wide lenses for something besides dramatic, sweeping shots emphasizing the background and you may be surprised at what you can get.

Get Dramatic

Speaking of dramatic, sweeping shots that emphasize the background, sometimes that's exactly what you need. While photographing a rancher in southern Kansas, a storm started rolling in (those Kansans love their thunderstorms). Using a wide angle while shooting from a low angle makes the subject feel heroic, and the distortion of the lens creates leading lines out of just about anything. Cropping mid-leg helps to minimize the effect of the distortion on his body, especially since the leather chaps hide the fact that his knees are nearly at the bottom of the frame.

Distort Reality

One of the biggest difficulties with wide angles can be their biggest benefit. When you just want to get weird with it, sometimes using distortion in an image can help

COMPOSITION WITH A WIDE ANGLE IS CERTAINLY MORE LIMITING DUE TO THE DISTORTION IT CREATES, BUT IT ALSO OPENS UP A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT SOMEONE.



The Camera Club of Central Minnesota

When to Shoot Wide (continued)



push it over the edge. The 22mm focal length on a shot stretches ones legs to be about twice the size of the torso, but more than

that, it makes the image feel a little off-kilter. When I'm stuck in a creative rut and need to change up my perspective, sometimes throwing

on a wide lens and giving subjects a larger-than-life look can help.

Monopods

Hands-down, a tripod is one of the most valuable pieces of photography gear you can buy. That is, unless you actually need a monopod instead of a tripod...

It's true — some photographers simply don't need the full setup to get great shots. Instead, they just need a trusty monopod to provide their camera with the support it needs.

The question is, how do you know if a monopod is right for you?

You Need to Work Fast

If you've ever been to a professional sporting event and looked at photographers covering the event, I guarantee that you see them shooting with monopods, not tripods.

That's because in that situation, photographers need to be able to move quickly. That's something you can't do with a full-size tripod attached to your camera.

Instead, a monopod trims the fat, so to speak, and gives your camera the support it needs, but enables you to quickly move positions from one end of the court or the field to the other without having to tear down the tripod, put it in your backpack, and carry everything to the next

shooting position.

This isn't to say that every tripod out there is a big, unwieldy thing that will prevent you from working quickly. But a monopod, like the Sirui P236 will certainly allow you to move faster than any tripod will. Monopods aren't just easier to move around with, but they are also easier to setup and tear down. When time is of the essence, a monopod is an ideal solution.

You Need to Work Light

Clearly, without the additional two legs, monopods offer another distinct advantage over tripods - they're much lighter.

This is advantageous for you when you're headed out for a long day of shooting and don't need a full-blown tripod.

It's also advantageous because monopods don't take up as much room in your bag, so you might be able to squeeze in another lens or another accessory with the extra space.

Take the Sirui P-306 monopod as a prime example. This rig weighs just 1.55 pounds and is 2"x2"x61". Yet despite its slight weight and small form-factor, it's got six leg sections, a reversible mounting plate screw, silicon twist locks, a metal foot spike

for improved stability, and a wrist strap for easy carrying.

That makes this monopod, and others like it, ideal for landscapes, portraiture, travel photography, and more.

You Don't Need Long Exposure Times

One area where a tripod can't be beaten is in long exposure photography. Because the shutter is open for such a long time, a tripod is an absolute must to keep the camera still throughout the exposure.

Even the most sure-handed photographer can't keep a monopod perfectly still, but if you have no need to take long exposures, then a monopod will work just fine for you.

Much like when you hold a camera in your hand, there's a limit to how long an exposure can be when you're using a monopod.

When shooting handheld, the rule of thumb is that the shutter speed needs to match or exceed the focal length of the lens. So, for example, if you're shooting with a 50mm lens, the shutter speed needs to be at least 1/50 seconds.

It's a good idea to follow this same rule of thumb when shooting with a monopod, that way you ensure that your photos are as sharp as possible.

CLEARLY, WITHOUT THE ADDITIONAL TWO LEGS, MONOPODS OFFER ANOTHER DISTINCT ADVANTAGE OVER TRIPODS — THEY'RE MUCH LIGHTER.



Wrapping It Up

A monopod isn't for everyone, nor is it for every shooting situation. But the same is true of a tripod. If you don't want to buy a tripod and a monopod, get the best of both worlds by getting a tripod with a detachable leg,

like the Sirui W. That way you have a tripod when you need it and a monopod when you don't.

The key is to understand that sometimes your camera needs more stability than your hands and arms can offer. Stop suffering with holding

your camera for hours on end and getting photos that aren't as sharp as they could be.

If you invest in a monopod, a tripod, or both, you'll get better photos as a result!



What If Its Been Done Before?

It doesn't matter if someone else has shot it before; you haven't shot it before! Try it out for yourself!

I think the worst advice that someone can tell you is: "Don't work on that photography project, it has already been done before." Ignore them. You haven't done it before!

Ignore nay sayers

This line of reasoning is like if someone told Elon Musk

People have already designed cars, thus you should never start your own car company.

Or imagine if people told Steve Jobs, "IBM has already made the PC. You shouldn't make a Macintosh computer.

Foolishness and ignorance is essential to creating something new

Innovation thrives on us being a bit foolish, and being (partially) ignorant of the things which have come before us.

Photographers and individuals who know too much from the past and history often become paralyzed, and cannot create new things, because they feel like "everything has already been done before/shot before."

But consider, what if the poet-

ry student never would attempt another new poem because "Shakespeare has already done all the good poetry." That would be silly.

Regardless of whatever you pursue in life, realize—you will always do it differently, in your own style, in your own light. Thus, never let any nay-sayers get in your way of trying out something new for yourself.

What is true originality in photography?

As a photographer, realize that in terms of subject matter, objects, and places, almost everything has been shot before. But it doesn't matter — true originality as a photographer comes more from:

- How you edit and sequence your project
- The concept behind your photography project
- The variations of subject matter within your project
- The compositions, framing, and angles, and perspective you use in your photography project
- How close you are to your subjects, or far away
- The soul you put into your photos

It is impossible to copy someone else 100%

Also consider, whenever you make a photograph of anything, the atoms, the light, the colors, the textures —everything will always be different! It is physically impossible to replicate a certain photograph 100%.

My practical suggestion is this:

Find inspiration from those in the past, but don't become their slave.

There is still much new roads for you to pave, explore, and innovate in!

That means, turn a (partial) blind eye to the masters of the past, and pursue your own unique view in photography and life.

THUS, NEVER LET ANY NAY SAYERS GET IN YOUR WAY OF TRYING OUT SOMETHING NEW FOR YOURSELF.





CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA

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

Camera Club Central Minnesota
101 12th Ave. S
Sartell, MN 56377

Newsletter Editor
Richard D. Heath
rheath@tds.net

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.

Creatives

Where Creatives Come From

The best creatives take inspiration from areas other than the discipline they are working in, and photographers should be no different. Have you ever thought about borrowing from the practices used by painters? There's a lot we could learn from these great masters.

Creative Crossovers

Back once more with another fascinating discussion on the topic of creative crossovers is Vinny Le Pes. In his video, Le Pes explores how the everyday actions of painters can be utilized and replicated to benefit the way photographers work. I have always tried to seek inspiration in as many different walks of life as possible, but my search for influence has always been more of a visual one. Until watching Le Pes' video, I have never really thought about the ways other creatives actually work and how very different their processes and educational backgrounds can be.

The video goes into great detail on the various benefits photographers can get from making studies, the painters approach to additive compositions, and the importance of studying things like anatomy and color. Le Pes also talks about the idea that painters are quite often forced to stop working while they wait for paint to dry and how those breaks can really help to give an artist the breathing space they need to make better art. I think we photographers could really enhance our practice by slowing things down a little when it comes to shooting and editing. It's all too easy in this digital age to race to get things online, and because of that, we sometimes lose sight of the bigger picture.

The video is well worth a watch if you feel yourself in a creative rut or are conscious that your photographic workflow isn't the healthiest. Why not consider taking a leaf out of the painter's sketchbook? They've been in this creative game much longer than us.

Question to Ponder

Do you borrow from any other walks of life to help you to be a better photographer?

