

THE CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA



The Newsletter of the Camera Club of Central Minnesota

Volume 10, Issue 9

September 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 September 10, 2018, Mississippi Community Room 106 at 7:00pm, State, county fair, local celebration or carnival.

Monday October 1, 2018, Mississippi Community Room 106, Wildlife: This could be something as small as a dragonfly or much larger.

Monday November 1, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, Environment: Fall Colors

Monday December 3, 2018, Bremer Community Room 104, Holiday Gathering: Submit five photos of the year and we will put them together into a slide show. Send them to jbregan063@gmail.com



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Golden Rules to Improve Your Photography

Follow these golden rules to improve your photography skills

Great pictures are the result of matching an interesting subject with the best light, a pleasing placement of the elements and exposing the sensor to just the right amount of light to translate the way you see the scene onto the camera's sensor. It is how the photographer handles this combination of technical and creative skills at a particular moment in time that produces unique images and allows individuality to shine through. Here are ten golden rules, put them into practice to lift your photography to the next level of creativity and consistency.

Take control of the picture-taking process

Take control of the picture-taking process by learning the technical stuff so you can take your camera off the fully automatic or program settings. And get to know your gear so that the mechanics of taking a photograph become second nature.

Learn to see the transformative power of light

The ability of light to transform a subject or scene from the ordinary to the extraordinary is one of the most powerful tools at the photographer's disposal. To be able to 'see' light and to understand how it translates onto the sensor and how it impacts on your compositions is the final building block in creating striking images.

Practice, practice, practice

Once you've got the technical stuff sorted, you can work efficiently with your gear and can see the light; practise. You can photograph most of the subjects you'll encounter while travelling in any town or city in the world, including your own.

Research & plan

Research and planning go a long way to getting you to the right place at the right time more often than not. The more time you have, the more opportunities you give yourself to



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Having a Blog (continued)



FROM A PHOTOGRAPHER'S POINT OF VIEW IT REALLY COMES DOWN TO HOW IMPORTANT OR UNIQUE THE POTENTIAL IMAGE IS.



photograph subjects in the best light. Photographers demand more time in a place than the average camera-toting tourist – sometimes just a few extra minutes can make all the difference.

Develop a picture-taking routine

Potential images abound – they will come and go in front of your eyes in a matter of seconds and are easily missed. A good routine plays a big part in helping you find great subjects and to react quickly enough to capture them.

Be patient & commit to the image

So much time creating good pictures is spent not actually taking pictures but incessantly looking, either on the move or standing around; watching, waiting. Very few really good photographs are the result of random, machine-gun-fire technique or accidentally being in the right place at the right time. Plus, if you're out and about you create the opportunity to come across fleeting moments. You will not get those 'lucky' pictures from your hotel room or bar stool.

Pay for photos only when it's appropriate

In popular destinations you could be asked for money in return for taking a photo. This may be considered a fair and reasonable exchange by some or a tiresome annoyance by others, or it may simply discourage you from photographing people. Ultimately you'll have to come up with a personal response. Certainly, don't hand out money (or sweets, pens or anything else for that matter) if it's not requested, but if it is prepared to pay or walk away. From a photographer's point of view it really comes down to how important or unique the potential image is.

Shoot raw files

If you want to get the very best results from your digital camera, capture your images using the raw file format, an option available on advanced compacts and DSLR cameras. Often described as a digital negative, it's the format preferred by professional photographers.

Become proficient with image-editing software

Shooting raw files requires a considerable amount of post-capture computer time and more than a basic understanding of image-editing software. Raw files must be processed or converted before they can be opened in photo-editing programs. Cameras with raw file capture are sold with proprietary software for that purpose. Alternatively, you can use a third-party specialist raw-conversion program or most typically one that is included in your image-editing software.

Critique your photos objectively

With more pictures being taken and seen than ever before (that's more pictures, not better pictures!), it's important to take some time to critique your own photos in an objective way. This is not easy. We're all emotionally attached to images we take and often enraptured by our own brilliance. Great – but if you want your pictures to stand out, a disciplined assessment of your pictures will give them the best chance of catching people's attention and being appreciated.

Tack Sharp Landscape Photos

Sharpness is a critical aspect of photography, and learning how to maximize the sharpness will allow you to take your landscape photography to the next level. In this article we'll take a look at the steps you can take to get super-sharp photos.

Prerequisites for Sharper Photos:

Before you head out on your next photographic journey, make sure you have these areas covered.

1. Invest in Quality Lenses

The lens you are using can

have a significant impact on the sharpness of your photos. Quality lenses will allow you to get the best sharpness possible, so prioritize quality lenses when assembling your kit. Most quality lenses will come at a price, but it is better to have just one or

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two quality lenses rather than several cheap lenses, especially when maximum sharpness is your goal.

2. Get to Know Your Lenses

When it comes to depth of field you will generally want to use a smaller aperture (larger f-stop number) to achieve maximum depth of field. With that in mind you may decide to set the aperture to f/22 or the minimum aperture allowed by your lens, but this will actually cause a loss of some sharpness. Most lenses will not pro-

duce the sharpest photos at the extreme edge of their range. Typically you would want to use something like f/10 – f/16 for maximum sharpness, but it will vary from lens to lens. That's why it is critical that you get to know your lenses well. Once you know how your lens typically performs you can base your exposure decisions accordingly, and the result will be the sharpest photos possible.

If you're not sure at what apertures your lenses produce the sharpest photos it is quite simple to run some tests and

find out. Just take your camera, lenses, and tripod out to a park, or anyplace where you can photograph a typical landscape, and take photos of the same scene at a variety of different apertures. When you return home you can view the images at 100% on your monitor and see how they compare to determine what aperture produces the sharpest images.



Photography is More Dead Than Ever

So many people are taking so many pictures thanks to the iPhone. Yet, renowned filmmaker and photographer Wim Wenders says photography is "more dead than ever."

"The trouble with iPhone pictures is nobody sees them," Wenders said in a recent BBC video interview during an exhibit of his Polaroid photos. "Even the people who take them don't look at them anymore, and they certainly don't make prints."

Wenders, whose impressive film credits include *Paris, Texas* and *Wings of Desire*, may sound like a grouchy, old analog type. But given

his celebrated creativity, his points about photography in the smartphone era are worth considering.

On Instagram alone, 60 million photos a day are uploaded. Photography historians, like Wenders does for the BBC, have sounded the alarm on how few of these images ever see the surface of digital photo paper.

Apps and filters are also nail's in the art form's coffin, according to Wenders. He sees software and algorithms as hindering creativity.

"I know from experience that the less you have, the more creative you have to be-

come," said Wenders, nominated for an Academy Award for the documentary *The Salt of the Earth*, about the documentary photographer Sebastião Salgado.

There is nothing wrong with pictures from a smartphone camera and Wenders, himself, admits he takes selfies. But creating images with a phone camera should not be called photography, he said.

"I'm in search of a new word for this new activity that looks so much like photography but isn't photography anymore," he said.

THE ALARM HAS BEEN SOUNDED ON HOW FEW OF THE IMAGES EVER SEE THE SURFACE OF DIGITAL PHOTO PAPER.

Working With the Historic Cyanotype Process

Keen to get more creative? Angela Chalmers reveals how working with the historic cyanotype process can generate really eye-catching images

While many photographers

make decisions about which lens, aperture or shutter speed is required to capture a moment of creativity, my photographic images are made without using a camera, and use the traditional cyanotype formula that was invented in

1842. The British botanist Anna Atkins, who has been described as the first woman to produce a photographic book, used the process to illustrate specimens of algae in *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*



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Working With Cyanotypes (continued)



in 1843, while famous artists such as Man Ray and László Moholy-Nagy rediscovered photograms during the avant-garde movements of the early 20th century.

The biggest joy of working with an alternative process is the impressive results you can achieve when you experiment and break rules. There are no boundaries with making photograms. In fact it is such a liberating way to make images that even if your first attempts are not masterpieces the creative experience of producing a simple photographic image without a camera is something that I feel all photographers should try at least once in their life. I would compare the sacred act of making black & white prints in the darkroom to making cyanotype prints – a simple yet satisfying photographic experience with unlimited possibilities. Indeed William Henry Fox Talbot, one of the pioneers of photography in the 1830s, continued to experiment with camera-less images for many years after he discovered how to produce photographic negatives.

The aesthetics of a photograph are somewhat mysterious, which is what grabbed my attention when I first saw the works of surrealist artist Man Ray. Almost any object that blocks the light can be used to cast shadows on a support. I have worked with feathers and birdcages, wedding dresses and

veils, and even people. There are infinite options to make unique photographic prints. Whatever the subject matter, they are quite intriguing and in some way ethereal. I always tell participants of my workshops that semi-transparent objects create the best effects. A solid object will block the light leaving a white silhouette, and translucent items allow the light to pass through and around. This can be interesting and creates fluctuating tones of blue. When working with nature, I prefer to choose flowers that are delicate, such as poppies, sweet pea and dandelion seed heads. The soft translucency of their petals and form create beautiful tones. Obviously, digital negatives or traditional large-format film negatives can be used to produce cyanotype prints. I am currently working with both digital negatives and 3D objects together on a series called 'The Flower Collector'.

Observe nature

I love to walk into the landscape and work directly with nature using sunshine as my light source. Direct sunshine will yield harder shadows, and diffused sunlight creates softer edges. Regarding the best time to expose outside in the UK, the sun gives more consistent results from March to September when the sun is higher in the sky; a couple of hours each side of noon usually work the best.

When travelling, I often carry a basic kit to process my prints outdoors. These prints are mostly on smaller sheets of paper, which are easier to

carry around. The experience of working on location becomes one of a physical engagement with my environment. You could call it multi-sensory. It is wandering, seeing, smelling, feeling, gathering and printing.

It is important to look closely at plants in their natural environment; this will be a useful practice to enhance your compositions back in the darkroom. While gathering foliage I make a mental note about the way certain flowers and grasses sit harmoniously side by side. A field and hedgerow full of bracken and hogweed is chaotic and wild; an elegantly designed parkland is much more orderly. When I am back in the studio with a collection of plant life, I create my own landscapes through considered composition. I might remove flower heads from their stalks to allow them to be placed flat on the paper.

Cyanotypes using digital negative

The combination of using a digital negative and a real object overlaid during the same exposure makes for some interesting results.

It is best to print in bright sunshine. The summer months are best for shorter exposures and stronger blues. However working outside under the rays of the sun leaves very little time to fiddle or move anything. If you do, your image may end up blurred. You don't have time to be indecisive when your paper is fast exposing. If a precise composition is more essential to your final print this needs to be done under a

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controlled light source. UV lamps are essential for all-year-round printing. Exposure units and even facial tanning lamps can be used.

My set-up is basic. I have a simple yet straightforward UV lighting system on an adjustable stand that can be moved up and down to accommodate a range of paper sizes. This gives me plenty of time to organise my composition under safe light. The downside is that exposure times are longer; large papers require 2-3 hours under my system. I use a 300W Osram lamp, which is designed to be a UV light source for amphibian cages. I made a basic lamp housing that I just plug into a 13 Amp socket. Get a qualified electrician to make this for you.

Be experimental

My favourite read is *Shadow Catchers: Camera-less Photography* by Martin Barnes. It's full of experimental techniques by contemporary artists who extend the creative possibilities of making a photograph image without the use of a camera. Cyanotypes sound terribly toxic, but are quite safe if used with care. They can be printed on paper, textiles, wood, ceramics and even glass.

Cyanotypes why it works

The beauty of creating photograms outdoors is not knowing what the final outcome will look like.

There are many ways of creating depth with a camera, using various apertures and focal length. Photographers can also see what their final image will look like. Using the photogram technique offers

an element of surprise, and the final outcome often reveals an unusual visual element.

Why does a hogweed image work? When working with nature, it is difficult to predict how the final picture will emerge. I often let the creative process go, and allow chance to play a part in my image-making process. In this case I was pleased with the way the overlapping forms created a sense of depth in the composition. I had no preconceived plan of what to expect with this print apart from my decision to document a wild verge on the North Yorkshire moors.

The exposure time was 10 minutes on a bright sunny day. After arranging a few items of plant life on the unexposed paper, I allowed for space to make additions nearer the end of the session and added new elements throughout the exposure. This affected the density of the Prussian blue. It also helped yield delicate gradations of tone that I feel give this photogram its magic and strength.

Top tips and techniques

I often move objects during a long exposure. I arrange my composition knowing I will remove a flower head or perhaps add another leaf. This helps to add a sense of depth and create various tones to the final print. This can be done at any time during exposure.

To create extra tones and textures I spray the dried unexposed paper with water before I arrange the plants. The cyanotype solution becomes diluted and dries

quickly in the sun leaving interesting marks. Also try coating your paper for a second time and double expose.

The way you coat the paper is subjective. Painterly brush strokes are very much a big part of my work. I occasionally coat the entire sheet of paper leaving no border, or use sheets of card to create a mask. This works well if you prefer clean straight edges.

Create more depth

It's not always necessary to flatten plants under glass. Delicate flowers, such as dandelion clocks, work best when they simply sit on the paper. This technique allows for light to pass through and around the 3D object creating soft blurry edges, and encourages shadows to form.

Enhance the blues

Prints will not reach their full density until they are dry (usually overnight), because it takes time for the sensitiser to oxidise in the air. To achieve an immediate oxidation, rinse the print for 1 minute in dilute hydrogen peroxide. While not necessary, it provides 'instant gratification'.

Tea toning

It's possible to change the color of cyanotypes by toning. The cyanotype must be left to oxidise first. A short immersion in tannic acid (a strong inexpensive tea), will transform the Prussian blue color to a navy blue. The tannic acid does not affect the archival qualities.



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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.

Elevate Your Landscape Photography



Landscape photography seems as straightforward as it could get – just aim your camera towards a nice view, get the right angle and framing, and press that shutter. However, learning a few tricks on technique and gear can certainly help you elevate your work and separate it from the rest.

Albert Dros, an award-winning professional photographer from the Netherlands, shared on the r/photography subreddit one simple yet incredibly useful tip that promises to “open up a whole new world.” All you need is 16mm wide angle lens or wider, full-frame equivalent; a small textured surface to serve as your foreground; and a good view, of course.

Albert’s quick tip reads in full as follows:

Use a wide angle (preferably 16mm or wider, full frame equivalent) and get EXTREMELY

close to objects. Get as close as the lens can focus (or even closer). With this technique, you can find foregrounds literally anywhere. Small textures can look huge in a photo. Try to get very low to the ground and look through your camera’s viewfinder or live view and see how the foregrounds look on the picture. When you get to a location, look for small details on the ground instead of the ‘main’ subject and view you will focus on.

By simply going wide, close, and low, you can easily offer new perspectives on your photographs.

Landscape photography is one topic we’ve discussed quite a few times in detail here on the site. We’ve dished out tips such as how to choose the right landscape photography lens for you, how to be better at landscape composition, and how to create and compose a great landscape photo.

