

General

No special news items.

The Late John Simons

We have been given the late John Simons' Photographic Print that will go on display in Sheepfair. This will be passed on to Joe and Ian on their return.

The photographic print is of the waterfall, known as the Lower Fall Pystil Rhaedar. It is the highest waterfall in Wales. The print reflects John's great interest and skill in photographing waterfalls. This was his passion until his illness made it difficult for him to carry his photographic equipment to the locations. Many members learned how to create stunning photos of waterfalls and flowing water thanks to John's help and guidance.

Session Aimed At Wider Phoenix Membership

The meeting this week was about basic photography. It was intended to attract anyone in Phoenix with a camera, even if it was a mobile phone. It was to be 100% non-technical.

The meeting was advertised by means of a flyer sent out to every Phoenix member with an email address.

We were overwhelmed when almost 600 Phoenix members turned up and were clamouring to get in. No, sorry, that's wrong. No one came who wasn't already a PPG member. This was a disappointment, but not unexpected.

I did receive messages from a couple of non-PPG members to say that they would like to come but that Monday afternoons clashed with other activities.

Photo Themes

Our photo themes (managed by Ian Halstead) are:

Rolling topic:

Summer

Holiday Snaps

Main Themes

Flowers & Insects

Wildlife

Architecture

Please send your images to Ian Halstead as usual.

Photo: Geoff Allsop



Next Meeting on 31st July

Flash Photography

This will be a practical session about using Flash.

It won't matter if you have:

- A built-in flash on your camera, that pops up or you lift up to use.
- A dedicated separate flashgun that plugs into the hot shoe on your camera and communicates with your camera to do clever stuff, or
- A non-dedicated flashgun such as an old flashgun or a studio unit.

We will cover the flash basics and then have some practical hands on sessions so that you can experiment and learn more about your own equipment, please bring along:

- A. Your camera
- B. Your flashgun or flashguns if you have more than one.
- C. Any light controllers (also called "modifiers") that you can use with your flashgun. These include simple gadgets that fit onto flashguns through to bigger things like light umbrellas and stands.
- D. Although you don't need to use a tripod with flash (the short pulse freezes action) it might be handy if you want to do repeat shots from the same position to make comparisons. It is not essential.
- E. If you have a flash trigger to allow you to fire a remote flash, bring that along too.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  AUTO | Auto Flash | This mode allows the camera to decide whether a flash is needed |
|  | Fill (force) Flash | The flash will fire regardless of whether the camera feels it is necessary. |
|  | No Flash | Turns off the flash. |
|  | Red Eye Reduction | This is suppose to help reduce the problem of red-eye by initiating a series of small flashes just before the main flash ignites. |

Last Meeting: 24th July

The meeting was in two halves.

It was NOT about equipment or how it worked, but about how to take better photos. So there was no talk of f/nos, shutter speeds, ISO, autofocus or menus or little dials and buttons. It was about taking a compelling photo.

In the first half Bob Bell explained that there were three different "activities" in any photographic process:

PHYSICS – All the technical stuff that creates a successful recorded image on a bit of silicon that we can view or print later.

PSYCHOLOGY – How we feel about the images we are taking.

PHYSIOLOGY – How our senses interpret the world and why a camera is different. Understanding this is the key to why some images have unwanted objects in them that we never noticed, and why some compositions are "pleasing" to our senses.

PHYSICS

We did not talk about any of the physics of photography or how to use a camera. If you couldn't do it with a Brownie 127 camera, we didn't discuss it.



PSYCHOLOGY

How we feel emotionally about the image.

Bob showed 20 photographs and asked for a show of hands if members liked the images enough to put them on their walls.

Only two images were liked by around half the members. The others generally were not liked.

The 20 pictures shown were the 20 most valuable photographs in the world, with the least expensive selling at auction for more than \$1 million.

A 4000 year old Chinese Saying is:

各花入各眼

Which translates as different flowers look good to different people. Or, as we say...

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

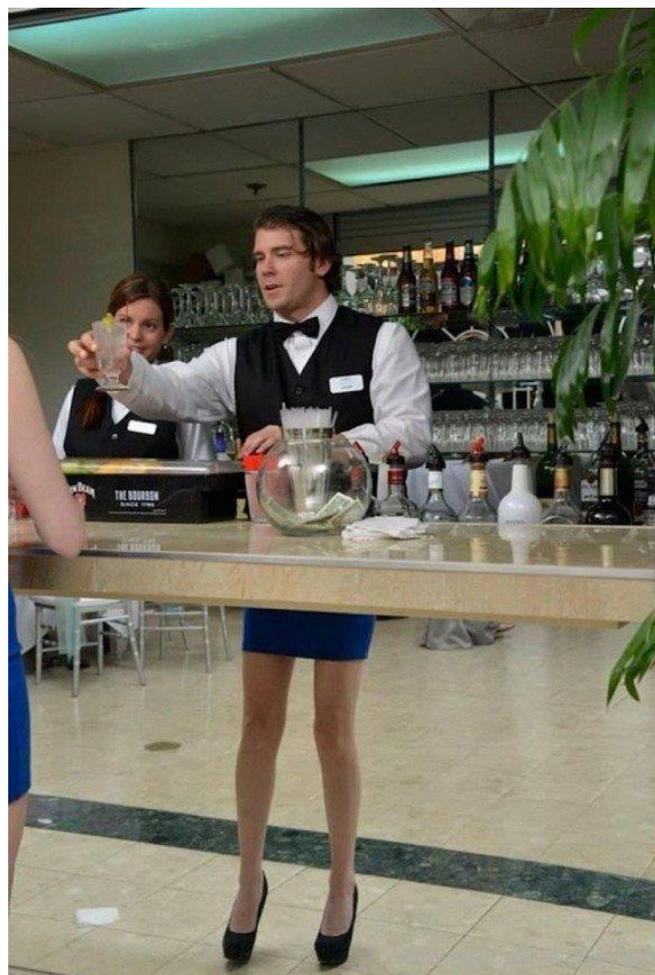


PHYSIOLOGY

How our senses interpret the world and why a camera is different. Understanding this is the key to:

- Why some images have unwanted objects in them that we never noticed, and
- Why some compositions are “pleasing” to our senses.

I didn't see it when I pressed the button.



Rules of Composition

Strictly speaking there are no “rules of composition”.

Our eyes are not very good and only have a small region of clear, high resolution vision. But the eye is part of the brain and it has an autonomous mechanism in the retina that processes information and redirects our focus of attention approximately 5 times a second to look at different parts of the scene around us.

For example, if there is a human face for us to look at, then a lot of these “glimpses” go to the eyes. This is why getting the eyes in sharp focus in our photos is so important.

Most of the so-called “rules of composition” are believed to work because they are in harmony with this autonomous mechanism and make the image seem better or draw our attention automatically to the point of interest.

A tri-fold on the Rules of Composition was given out and is attached to the email.

There is nothing wrong with breaking the rules – they are only guidelines, but it is wise to know what they are - there is a big difference between deliberately breaking rules and ignorance.

What is the purpose of your photograph?

The most important component in any photo is the mind of the person who will be looking at it.

Is the photo to be:

- A record
- Something to show/give friends and family
- Just for your own interest/satisfaction
- To help a hobby (e.g. Painting)
- To sell an item on ebay
- To win a competition
- For publication
- For a picture library

How will it be viewed?

- Prints?
- Photo album / Photo book?
- Put on the wall/in a frame?
- On a computer?
- On a tablet/phone?
- On a TV?
- Projected (i.e. an audience)?
- Electronic distribution to friends and family?
- As an advert on ebay?
- As part of your social media, such as facebook?

The above lists are just examples.

Part 2 – open session

In the second half of the meeting, members contributed their own tips and hints.

Rob Cross

Rob kindly gave us a series of helpful tips for taking landscapes.

He explained that with a landscape you needed the shot to be as sharp as possible from the foreground to the distance.

This is achieved by:

- Using the smallest possible aperture (biggest f/no such as f/22) on your lens to get the greatest depth of field.
- Focusing, not at the distant hills or a near object, but at a point about 1/3 way into the scene. This keeps the distant objects sharp but keeps things near sharp as well.
- Small apertures (large f/nos) mean far less light is entering the lens so exposure times are long. Therefore a tripod is a very useful thing (turn off image stabilisation).

Rob always shoots in RAW so that he can extract the maximum tonal range from his images.

He recommends experimenting with your camera and its ISO settings to find the ISO setting where noise is unacceptable to you. With older cameras noise became a problem above about 200 ISO, but modern camera noise reduction systems are so good that noise only becomes noticeable at much higher ISOs.

Rob made the very valuable point that the lens, not the camera is the critical part of the camera and that there is no point in having an expensive camera without a good lens. A good lens will have a large aperture (low f/no) allowing more light.

Rob also explained that by using a small aperture and a low ISO (on a tripod), this gave long exposure times that would blur the motion of water and make the surface of water look smooth and give a different quality to rivers and waterfalls (see John Simons’ photo when it goes up in Sheepfair).

There was discussion about the storage capacity of memory card and the speed of transfer and many other topics too numerous to include here.

Thanks Rob, for sharing some of your know how with others.

Peter Bell

One of the “rules” is to use different viewpoints for the photograph.

In a very modest way, Peter Bell showed us a selection of superb images that were a masterclass in the rules of composition.



In particular, Peter had taken shots from positions that were not from the normal eye level view. Some were from low positions that were at eye level with the animals. In one case, apparently, accidentally dipping the lens of a Sony full frame camera into the water. The camera was loaned by a relative for him to try out and he only found out how expensive it was later!

Peter's shots also illustrated how he had separated the subject from anything distracting in the background. Where he could not do this by careful focus and positioning, he had introduced a temporary background.

Peter explained that often Judges did not rate his photos very much. That says nothing about the calibre of Peter's excellent photos and a lot about judges.

Thanks Peter.

Arthur Davies

Arthur very kindly came with some of his prints for us to see. We had used some of his photos already such as this one which shows the use of a strong diagonal to create a pleasing image.



And this one, which is a great shot, but is improved by mild cropping so that he is less central with space to move into:



Proving that having your camera ready to shoot, and that the image is everything, Arthur took this "grab shot" on film, many years ago spinning around to catch his daughter kicking a ball at him with his son, Paul, in the background.



Thanks Arthur for some really good contributions.

Thanks also to everyone who freely gave helpful hints, tips or information.

Members Photos

Members' Photos

Geoff Allsop has kindly sent in some superb photos of sunsets, attempting to fall off boats, homes for bees and of plants.

We will see more of them next Monday and Geoff will explain.

