

SPS Newsletter

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Well 2022 is here and I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year period. I don't know if like me any of you are pleased when 21st December comes? Although it marks the first day of Winter it also marks the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere, when the sun appears at its most southerly position, directly overhead at the Tropic of Capricorn and yippee it means lighter nights and better weather are on the way!



2022 has so far given us plenty of photographic opportunity with crisp, frosty mornings, blue sky and sunshine and some lovely sunrises and sunsets as well as a Wolf moon. Mild weather has surprised us and already bulbs and buds are starting to show, so I hope you are all already finding photographic inspiration. And they are always telling us New Year is all about 'Making Resolutions' – how about one of yours is to send something in for the Newsletter this year? You can send in anything you want, something you found interesting and want to share, a photograph, a joke – whatever, anything goes really. And, isn't 2022 going to be an exciting year with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, the Commonwealth Games coming to Birmingham and, fingers crossed, light at the end of the tunnel with the COVID pandemic receding into an endemic.

In December's Newsletter we looked at favourite Christmas foods and noted that on average on Christmas Day an individual consumes 6,000 calories. If, like me, you think you might have had a calorie too many over the Christmas period I thought an appropriate subject matter for this Newsletter might be Food Photography. I love reading the monthly Waitrose Food magazine and often think how 'artistic' their photographs of the food are and the novel ways in which it is presented to entice the reader and tickle those taste buds. As a genre I have found Food Photography really interesting researching and it is not something we see much of in photography competitions – maybe it's something new to try your hand at in 2022?

Best wishes

Liz xx

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02

Through the Lens

‘Food for Thought’

Food photography is a ‘still life’ photography genre used to create attractive still life photographs of food. A specialisation of commercial photography, food photography is used in advertisements, magazines, on packaging, menus or in cookbooks and on social media. Professional food photography is not just about a single author but is a collaborative effort, usually involving a team of people including an art director, a photographer, a food stylist, a prop stylist and their assistants. Often, and controversially, food photography is presented in a way that exaggerates the attractiveness or size of the advertised food. This is a technique most often employed in respect of fast food photography – think of how big a ‘Big Mac’ sometimes looks in a picture!

Photography’s first ‘still life’ was a table set for a meal, by Nicéphore Niepce in 1827. However, the most well-known image is Henry Fox Talbot’s ‘The Pencil of Nature’ in 1846, a daguerreotype, showing fruit baskets of peaches and pineapple on patterned tablecloths. Their compositions are reminiscent of 17th century Flemish still-life paintings. Roger Fenton was also well known for photographing food such as grapes. And the reason why they started photographing food ... because it didn’t move! Their monochrome images often aped elaborate still life paintings, including their moral and religious symbolism - a shiny apple could represent Eve’s fall, or a fuzzy peach could suggest fertility.



The Pencil of Nature, A Fruit Piece - William Henry Fox Talbot

Although monochrome pictures began to appear in early cookery books, the production process was slow. Professional photographers used the half-tone process for cheaper reproduction. By breaking the images into a series of dots, it was much easier to reproduce the full tonal range of a photograph in print. 25 Chromolithograph plates printed in colour featured in the cookery book ‘Le Livre de Cuisine’, 1867 (“The Royal Cookery Book”) by well-known French chef, Jules Gouffé. Images like this may have influenced contemporary images of abundant food and set the scene for how food photography started to be presented. As photography became a popular medium, advancements in printing paved the way for easier production and more images started to appear.

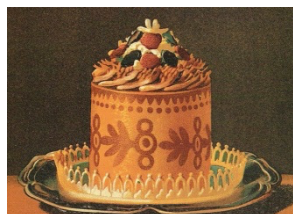


Illustration of Timbale a la Milanaise ('Livre de Cuisine', Jules Gouffé)



How fast is milk?

It’s pasteurised before you’ve seen it!

In 1910, photographer Wladimir Schohin rendered his photographs with colour by way of autochrome. One of his famous images was that of a cracked egg.



In 1927, photographer Edward Steichen produced pictures highlighting form, kind, and shadow. Images now turned 'dynamic' and the trend moved to focussing on creating intricate designs and shapes with meals, moving to become more 'art'. The 1930s saw more colour being introduced to food photography and food images become an industrial commodity used in product promotion and advertising. There followed a rise in cooking booklets and books showing pages of colourful meal images. This was partly because colour printing technology had moved forward considerably. In 1935, Nickolas Muray adapted the three-colour carbro process and *McCall's* (a popular US magazine) commissioned him to create colour photographs for their cooking and food pages. He used the colour carbro process to make rich and colourful photographs of food spreads for the magazine and for other advertisers during the 1950s.



'Chocolate Pie' (photograph in *McCall's Magazine*)

In 1957, Harold Edgerton, (an electrical) engineering professor at the American University, MIT in Boston, experimented with shutter motors and strobe lights to capture a splatter of a milk drop in an experiment referred to as the 'Milk Drop Coronet', basically freezing a second in time. This revolutionary picture and approach led to digital flash altering meal images.



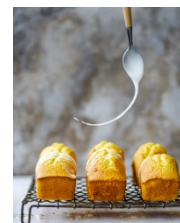
'The Milk Drop Coronet'

The 1970s saw more colourful and some would say 'tacky' images of food (think Fanny Craddock!), followed by the introduction of props in the 1980s, creating more of a 'storyline' around the food being presented. The 1990s saw a further change with people being introduced into photographs as a general focus on the storytelling element and human link to food, cookbooks moving from mere books of cookery to more stories about the chefs (think Jamie Oliver and Mary Berry), with images of them cooking etc.



In the late 1990s and early 2000s, digital cameras and lenses made important enhancements for photographers seeking to capture food images. The technology was available to more people and through it we started to see meals photographed in pure daylight once more. Images also were presented how the author wished you to see and experience them rather than as a complete dish. 'Foodstagramming' was formally born with people capturing a picture of their scrumptious dish on an evening out or their masterpiece after spending the day cooking? Meal and food images turned extensively accessible due to social media. How many of you have in the past or regularly take pictures of your food and post them on your Facebook page or WhatsApp to friends and family – I know I often do! The rise of cafe pictures resembling latte artwork and top-down pictures of avocado toast by way of the sharing of hashtags like "#foodporn" are common-place now on all social media channels.

For a long time, food photographs tended to be shot and composed in a manner from the point of view of the eater, laid out on a table setting and shot from an overhead perspective. Stylists accordingly arranged the food to appear good from above, with the items arranged flat on the plate and clearly separated from each other. Then alternative lighting styles, shallower angles and more props came *en vogue*, with extreme cases leading to the term "food porn" (think how Nigella Lawson's cookbook photographs are presented compared to Mary Berry! Or how M&S present their food images). Most recently, the prevailing trend in Western commercial food photography is to present the food as simple, clean and naturally as possible and with little props, often using effects such as selective focus, tilted plates, and extreme close-ups. This complements trends in professional cooking to make the food more visually interesting but still seductive. For instance, the height of dishes tends to increase and their elements are often layered, which lends itself well to narrow-angled shots. The current trend is also being influenced by our concern for the environment and healthy eating. Photographers are also trying to distinguish themselves from the social media frenzy of food images, with a shift to move again into more 'artwork' images. Meals-wise, there's a focus on the pure, uncooked elements and breaking them down visually with ingredient pictures and occasionally the inclusion of props. Gosh is it me or does it seem like we have come full circle?



If, like me, you have ever taken photographs of your food, maybe a cake you have baked or a dish you have made, and wonder why your finished photographs don't look anything like the food in the magazines and cookery books, even when you have followed the recipe showing what it should look like, I may be able to enlighten you as to why this is.



The process of food photography begins with the purchase of the food and ingredients. Only the most visually perfect foodstuffs are acceptable and multiple backup or test items are usually needed. The 'best-looking' of the purchased items is selected and marked as the "hero", (the item that will be featured in the photograph). During the setup and for test shoots, it is represented by a cardboard stand-in.

The actual photography normally takes place in a studio with controlled lighting conditions or under natural light. The light, background and setting are carefully prepared so as to present the food in as attractive a way as possible without distracting from it. The colour and texture of the background is selected to effectively complement that of the food and assist with its lighting. Likewise the plates, cutlery and other props, if being used, are similarly selected.

Food photography also employs a number of tricks (or 'cheats') to make the food look its best. Here are a few of them ...

With drinks, to create the effect of a thin layer of condensation forming on the outside of glasses containing cold liquid, dulling spray may be applied, with paper or masking tape protecting the non-"frosted" areas. More pronounced condensation and dew drops are imitated by spraying the glass with corn syrup or glycerine. Ice cubes are made of acrylic so they do not move or melt during the shoot. Fresh-looking bubbles on the surface of drinks are created by applying a mixture of the drink and detergent to the surface with an eyedropper. White glue may be used in lieu of milk and a mixture of brewed coffee and water instead of tea.

Salad photography is composed with a view to creating appealing textures, shapes and colours. To improve support and aid in composition, salad in a bowl is built around a smaller bowl placed inverted in the larger bowl. As only the outer layer of the salad is of interest, the concealed interior of the salad bowl may be filled with mashed potatoes or another mixture. Salad greens are kept fresh and crisp by misting them with cold water prior to composition. Salad dressing is not normally used as it makes the salad slippery and difficult to style, but the appearance of dressing may be created by sprinkling herbs and spices over the wet salad, or mixing them in oil and applying it with a brush.

Meat is often only superficially cooked and the edges browned with a blow torch and the meat made to look appetising by using a colourant. With sandwiches wet paper towels are used to prevent the bread from drying out. If a half sandwich is to be depicted, the bread and the components are individually sliced with scissors and assembled in place, held together with toothpicks etc.



Why couldn't the sesame seed leave the casino?

Because it was on a roll!

So there you have it, if you want to produce good looking food images you need a team around you to help you style the food and do the technical bits and ideally a studio. You need to 'cheat' and not reveal that all is not what it seems in the photograph and be a canny shopper to find your 'heros'! And guess what, if you are good at it then you could earn money from it. It seems salaries start from £10K rising to £173K p.a. for the top 86% of food photographers – not a bad little earner!

I Googled who were the top food photographers in the world currently and was rather surprised to see that they are all women. So, if you want to find out more about them, their work and different styles of food photography here they are:

World's Top 8 Food Photographers:

- 1.Laura Muthesius
- 2.Mowie Kay
- 3.Lenka
- 4.Skyler Burt
- 5.Lauren Caris
- 6.Joanie Simon
- 7.Jackie Alpers
- 8.Jennifer Pallian



Laura Muthesius (World's Best Food Photographer)

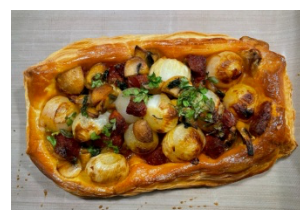
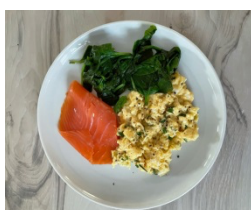


Mowie Kay (No. 2 Food Photographer in the World)
Produces a lot of images for big brands like M&S, Tesco and KFC.

You can also enter annual competitions to win the overall title of 'Food Photograph of the Year'. Here is 2021's winning image, 'Taste' by Li Huaifeng, China.



I think I have a considerable way to go with my images but as they say the journey has to start somewhere ... I think I am a long way away from my destination though! See what you think, all captured with my iPhone!



03

Project Photography

By Phil Moorhouse

We all love a new project, but the idea of a photographic project can be particularly therapeutic. Projects might be short-term, like photographing a collection of treasured items on the tabletop, or long-term, like visiting every one of the, now retired, fleet of Concordes. Prior to the ongoing pandemic, I experienced a number of 'rehearsal' lockdowns, where I was 'confined to barracks' for several long weeks or months. My photography projects preserved my sanity, and probably that of my long-suffering wife.

Back in August 2015, on a sunny Sunday afternoon trip to buy a newspaper, my foot slipped from my wheelchair, and I managed to break my leg rather spectacularly. Except for visits to the fracture clinic, I found myself confined to home for some nine months. Harking back to my childhood collection of Dinky toys and my love of the Gerry Anderson series 'Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons', I trawled eBay and decided to re-instate my collection. I purchased a number of well-loved Dinky toys, the tattier the better, and set about restoring them to their former glory, photographing the various stages of the process. It became quite a cottage industry, with the conservatory becoming my production line. Each model was carefully dismantled, paint removed meticulously, primer applied, cooked in the oven, base coat, top-coat, cooked again, polished, and stickers applied. The process was documented with a series of images and the project completed by compiling a short Audio-Visual presentation, set to the theme tune from 'Toy Story', of course.



Here's a link to the video: <https://youtu.be/hnn8FtyA28o>

Lockdown rehearsal #2 presented itself in August 2019, when recovering from Sepsis. This time, a week in hospital was followed by several weeks recovery at home, made tolerable with another desktop photography project. Once again, consulting eBay, I purchased a collection of model railway figures and set about creating a series of scenes. Railway workers, police officers, road sweepers, buskers and other figures were carefully placed on fruit and veg, maps, cameras, beer cans, etc. Plenty of scope for corny titles here, right up my street!





During the lockdowns of the past couple of years, Mick has astonished us with his 'Lockdown Bugs' project, finding the extraordinary in the ordinary, in his back garden. Tim has shown us deserted Birmingham cityscapes, shot on his way to work at the hospital. My Lego projects have been supported by the antics of two artist's mannequins, affectionately known as Rob and Bob. Previously discarded images from long ago have been re-visited with new-found editing skills, re-surfacing in our club competitions.



So, what projects do you fancy?

- ✓ Photographing the iconic bridges of the UK.
- ✓ Re-visiting the same location, to record how it changes each week, month, season, or year.
- ✓ Every photograph taken within a half-a-mile of home.
- ✓ Every photograph taken with the same lens or focal length.
- ✓ Visit a series of (related) locations and press the shutter just once.
- ✓ Photographing discarded shopping trolleys, or discarded face-masks.
- ✓ Choose a theme – base your pictures on that theme.
- ✓ Portraits – family members or pets.
- ✓ ABC – pictures representing every letter of the alphabet.

"The picture that you took with your camera is the imagination you want to create with reality."

- Scott Lorenzo

04

Photography Podium

Here's a round-up of the results from our recent competitions.

'Society Knockout'



Well what a great night we had with over 500 images to vote on and the considerable amount of money it raised for the Society's funds, so thank you all for your entries and generosity. It was great to see such a variety of pictures and I thoroughly enjoyed the evening although I was exhausted by the end. I don't know about you but I had RSI in my index finger from tapping my iPad screen so often! Hats off to Phil for keeping his concentration going when repeatedly having to say "Left or Right" and varying how he said it. Many congratulations to our winner Dave Venables with his beautiful 'Tanglewood Creek', such an evocative image and I think it must be a really proud and humbling feeling when you know your fellow members have voted your image as the one they like the most.

	All Entries	
First Place:	<i>Tanglewood Creek</i>	Dave Venables
Second Place:	<i>Blossom Birds</i>	Jenny Ladbrooke
Top six runners-up:	<i>Cheetahs</i>	Sue Pearmain
	<i>Giant's Causeway</i>	Tim Hutchin
	<i>Winter Robin</i>	Jolanta B. Axon
	<i>Icy Lake</i>	Tony Dyson
	<i>Woods Farm Winter</i>	Mick Schilling
	<i>Howling Red Stag</i>	Mick Schilling

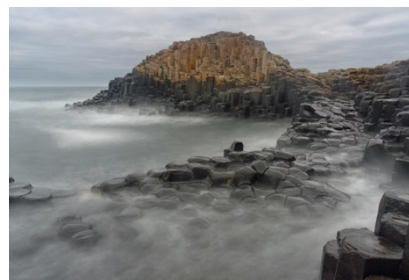
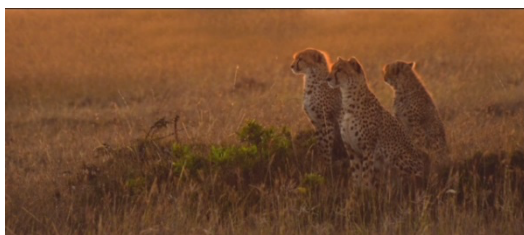


1st – Tanglewood Creek



2nd – Blossom Birds

Runners-Up



"Beauty can be seen in all things, seeing and composing the beauty is what separates the snapshot from the photograph."

- Matt Hardy



Mmm ...!

If a picture is worth a thousand words then why shouldn't we judge a book by its cover?

External Recognition

Chris Mallett has advised that the following entries have been successfully made to The Photographic Alliance of Great Britain for their forthcoming competition, the GB Cup. Chris will keep us updated on the outcome of the entries. Many congratulations to all members who have had their pictures submitted and fingers crossed and good luck that we do well.



The GB Cup - Open and Nature 2022

Open (Digital)

Entry No.	Title	Author
1	Joe Jake and Jack in the Box	Jolanta B. Axon
2	Magnolia in Vase	Jolanta B. Axon
3	Sisters behind the Voile	Jolanta B. Axon
4	Lockdown Reflections	Tim Hutchin
5	Marine Lake Railings	Tim Hutchin
6	Antelope Canyon	Tim Hutchin
7	On the Window Ledge	Jenny Ladbrooke
8	Urban Pollution	Jenny Ladbrooke

9	Stormy Staircase	Christine Mallett
10	Trees in the Snow	Christine Mallett
11	Coventry Cathedral	Phil Moorhouse
12	Identity Parade	Phil Moorhouse
13	Sparkling Wine	Phil Moorhouse
14	A Fathers Love	Sue Pearmain
15	Doorstep Conversation	Sue Pearmain
16	Lost in Thought	Sue Pearmain
17	Windswept Deadvlei	Sue Pearmain
18	Girl on a Bench	Jane Roby
19	Denthead Rain	Mick Schilling
20	Drift Car Fuel Leak	Mick Schilling
21	Heading out to see Grandma	Mick Schilling
22	Flowing Water	David Venables
23	Tree Trunks and Leaves	David Venables
24	Growing with the Flow	Mick Schilling

Nature (Digital)

Entry No.	Title	Author
1	Red Soldier Beetle on Grass	Jolanta B. Axon
2	Buff-Tailed Bumble Bee	Tim Hutchin
3	Male False Oil Beetle	Tim Hutchin
4	Spider with Tortoiseshell Butterfly	Tim Hutchin
5	Brown Hyena Retrieving Kill	Jenny Ladbroke
6	Aphids on Thistle	Christine Mallett
7	Female Atlantic Seal with Newborn Pup	Christine Mallett
8	Globe Skimmer	Christine Mallett
9	Horseshoe Crabs Mating	Christine Mallett
10	Black Backed Jackal Pair	Sue Pearmain
11	Kirks Dik Dik	Sue Pearmain
12	Lionesses Approaching Waterhole	Sue Pearmain
13	Six Banded Armadillo	Sue Pearmain
14	Carpenter Bee	Jane Roby
15	Eastern Grey Kangaroo	Jane Roby
16	Harbour Seals	Jane Roby
17	Owl and Owlet	Jane Roby
18	Mating Blue-Tailed Damselflies	Mick Schilling
19	Male Banded Demoiselle	Mick Schilling
20	Puffin Approaching	Mick Schilling
21	Mayfly in Canola Field	Mick Schilling
22	Brown Hare	David Steele
23	Fallow Deer	David Venables
24	Female Blackbird Bathing	David Venables

That's all folks ... see you in February