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Well we seem to have roared through June and are already well into July. Didn't we have a great 4 days celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, although the weather could have been a tad better. Did anyone have a go at making the Platinum Pudding? Here's my take on a Platinum Pudding ... it was delicious! I would love to hear how you celebrated the Jubilee and any images you have so do please send me some for the next Newsletter. I went 'Balloon Chasing' on the Sunday morning which was great fun, although it was an early start as the balloons went up at 6 am!



Is it me or does this year just seem to be flying by more quickly than usual? As ever I seem to be a 'Busy Lizzie' playing lots of golf (and with some success this year I might say patting myself on my back, having picked up several pieces of silverware lately). I have already managed to fit in a week's holiday in Devon and a week's holiday in Cornwall, both of which I was blessed with super warm, sunny weather. I visited Kew Gardens recently (a tick on my bucket list now) which I thoroughly enjoyed. And the diary is pretty full over the forthcoming weeks ... There is the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham to look forward to later this month and into August, so if anyone is going to this and wants to send me some images or an article about any of the events they attend please do. There will be some great sporting photography images to be taken (I am thinking ahead for competitions next season!).

Hopefully you have been able to go to some of the Summer Pub socials and catch up with fellow members. We also have Jenny's President's Picnic on Saturday, 16th July to enjoy at Cotswold Wildlife Park. Forthcoming Pub socials are:

- Thursday 21st July - Bluebell Cider House, Earlswood
- Thursday 18th August - Drum & Monkey

I don't know whether any of you have managed to view Geoff Owen's website about his recent Double Heart Bypass surgery, the link for which Phil emailed to us all. It's very interesting and worth a view. And to Geoff, I send all of our best wishes to you and hope you are recovering well and feeling a lot better.

And finally, I wanted to express my thanks to you all for being awarded the Patrick Barlow Trophy this year. It was a complete surprise to me and I am very honoured and humbled to be its recipient. I follow in the footsteps of some great members. Very many thanks it's an award I will treasure.

I hope you are all having a lovely Summer and managing to get out and about but staying safe. Whatever you are doing and wherever you are going enjoy yourselves. And remember in this hot weather to drink plenty and stay hydrated, wear a hat and slop on the suncream.

With my very best wishes

Liz xx



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02

Through the Lens

Coastal Photography

Having recently been on holiday in Devon and Cornwall, walking some sections of the South West Coast Path whilst in Cornwall, and marvelling at the dramatic landscapes, I started thinking about whether there were any photographers who specialised in sea and coastal photography. So I consulted my good friend Professor Google who told me about some notable exponents of coastal images one of which I thought I would share with you.

Gustav Le Gray is well-known for his sea and sky photography. Born in 1820 near Paris he trained as a painter not taking up photography until 1847. Even before he started taking marine images, he became one of the most renowned pioneers of the new art of photography. His architectural, landscape and portrait photographs, his writings, teaching and inventions were all highly influential. However, in 1860, despite his success, he became bankrupt taking his family to Italy and then Egypt where he became a drawing instructor, though he continued to take photographs.

The Great Wave, the most dramatic of his seascapes, combines his technical mastery with expressive grandeur. He took the view on the Mediterranean coast near Montpellier. At the horizon, the clouds are cut off where they meet the sea indicating the join between two separate negatives. The combination of two negatives allowed Le Gray to achieve tonal balance between sea and sky on the final print, giving a more truthful sense of how the eye, rather than the camera, perceives nature.



The Great Wave

When first shown, the luminous, shimmering effects amid Le Gray's otherwise dark seascapes were often mistaken for moonlight. It is easy to see why this misconception arose in these monochrome images where darkness encroaches towards the edges of the scene. In fact, he achieved the moonlight effect by pointing the camera in the direction of the sun during daylight. To a 19th Century audience a passing gleam of light reflected in the water might well have a biblical association. In 1857, after seeing one of Le Gray's sea views, a critic for the Journal of the Photographic Society wrote:

"From the midst of this 'pothor' of dimness falls a gush of liquid light, full and flush on the sea, where it leaves a glow of glory...It is as when Jacob's ladder of angels was just withdrawn, and the radiance above and below, where it rested on earth and sky, had not yet melted out."



The Sun at its Zenith

Technical virtuosity aside, Le Gray's seascapes have great artistic power. In 1856 he wrote:

'Since its first discovery, photography has made rapid progress, especially as regards the instruments employed in its practice. It now remains for the artist to raise it to its proper position among the fine arts.'

The seascapes were, and are still, Le Gray's greatest public, commercial and aesthetic success. He took a first set in Normandy in the Summer of 1856 and a second set from the Mediterranean coast in Spring 1857. Shortly afterwards they were exhibited in London and Paris, to a rapturous response. One reviewer for the Journal of the Photographic Society (21 February 1857) wrote:

'We stop with astonishment before M. Le Gray's "Sea and Sky", the most successful seizure of water and cloud yet attempted. The effect is the simplest conceivable. There is a plain, unbroken prairie of open sea, lined and rippled with myriad smiling trails of minute undulations, dark and sombrous and profoundly calm, over the dead below – smooth as a tombstone.'

It was not only their beauty that attracted high praise but also Le Gray's technical mastery in capturing apparently instantaneous views. To arrest breaking waves was an impressive accomplishment at a period when exposures required many seconds rather than split seconds. Most photographers found it impossible to achieve proper exposure for both landscape and sky in a single picture. This usually meant sacrificing the sky, which was then over-exposed. Le Gray's innovation was to print some of the seascapes from two separate negatives – one exposed for the sea, the other for the sky – on a single sheet of paper. His glass negatives were the same size as his photographs – c.32 x 42 cm (12 ½ x 16 ½ ins). He placed the negative directly on top of the photographic paper and printed in sunlight. The prints were then toned in a solution of gold chloride in hydrochloric acid. This resulted in a rich, violet-purple colour, with the added benefit of stabilising the images to help them withstand fading over time.

Collodion-on-glass negatives were introduced in 1851. Le Gray adopted them in preference to paper negatives to achieve maximum sharpness coupled with even faster exposure times. The glass plate was covered with a solution of ether and guncotton (cotton steeped in nitric and sulphuric acids). It was then sensitised. The negative had to be exposed in the camera while still wet and developed immediately afterwards.



In his writing, Le Gray set out a 'theory of sacrifices'. This suggested that in a work of art detail could be sacrificed in the interests of the overall impression of light and shade. Throughout his career, and especially with his marine images, Le Gray rose to this challenge. To unite the seascapes compositionally, Le Gray created a framework of horizontal zones, with few constraining borders. Within this, he explored the potential of the subject, from empty skies and calm waters to brooding cloudscapes and turbulent waves. He enlivened the scenes with figures, jetties, beaches and seagoing vessels. With these simple notes, he composed a series of images that are breathtaking in their subtlety and symphonic grandeur.

The V&A Museum in London houses Le Gray seascapes, having received them in 1868 as part of a bequest from the millionaire art collector Chauncy Hare Townshend. He had kept them in portfolios along with his watercolours, etchings and engravings. They have therefore remained in excellent condition, preserved to museum standards almost since they were made.

And what of today's more modern seascape photographers? I don't know if any of you are familiar with the work of Joe Cornish, the well-known landscape photographer who has produced many iconic images for the National Trust of their landscapes as well as being a successful landscape photographer in his own right. His portfolio contains many seascapes and his website is well worth a look at.

So are you curious yet about the art of seascape photography? Here are some tips on how to capture the pristine beauty of the coast.

- Try shooting in bad weather. Some of the most beautiful and intriguing seascapes can be captured then.
- Try using a very dark ND filter like the ND1000 to get spectacular blurred water effects.
- Your tripod must be heavy and robust enough to remain still and withstand the beating of the waves.
- A technique to use in seascapes is bracketing instead of neutral density filters. It gives more power in the post-processing.
- A beautiful foreground will make a simple photo more voluminous and interesting. This foreground can be stones, the shoreline, or reflections on the water.
- Shoot during sunset or dawn.
- Work the scenery, and find something interesting. Look for leading lines to incorporate into your scene. Try new things. Play with your settings, especially your shutter speed, and try different heights on your tripod. Don't stay in one spot - move around.
- The weather is often of secondary importance. To add an amazing atmosphere to your seascapes, try to use long exposure times.

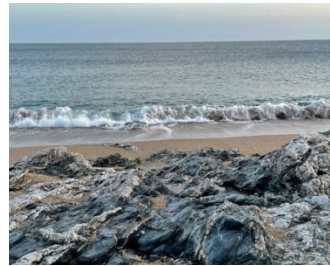


I don't know about you but I absolutely love the coast and always have to get my 'fix' of seeing the sea. I can walk on beaches and coastal paths or just simply sit and look at the views and the waves for hours on end. The French explorer, conservationist, and photographer Jacques Cousteau once said,

"The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever."

I think I am certainly under the sea's spell. With every wave they transform, and yet, in some essential sense, they remain the same throughout the centuries. A group of people could look out from the same shore at the same time of day, and each person would see something different. The sea and its many unknown creatures are reminders of the smallness of humankind. No matter how big we feel, we are dwarfed by the vastness of the water.

And here's one of my shots of the sea from my recent trip. I think I have a bit of a way to go to match Joe Cornish and Le Gray and as the judge would probably say "The author has captured the movement of the wave and it is a nice record shot ...!". But what the judge doesn't know are the special memories and pleasure the shot evokes for me.



The Wave



How do you know the Ocean is friendly?

It waves

What did the Ocean say to the Surfer?

Have a swell time

And see if you knew these facts about the world's oceans:

- An estimated 50-80% of all life on earth is found under the ocean surface and the oceans contain 99% of the living space on the planet. Less than 10% of that space has been explored by humans. 85% of the area and 90% of the volume constitute the dark, cold environment we call the deep sea.
- The ocean produces 70% of the world's oxygen and absorbs 50 times more carbon dioxide than our atmosphere. 14% of the world's protein comes from the sea.
- The ocean contains more ancient artifacts than any museums, including c.3 million shipwrecks.
- The largest mountain range is found underwater and is called the 'Mid-Oceanic Ridge'. It is c.40,390 miles long. And remember in the UK you are never more than 70 miles from the sea.



03

Common Problems and how to avoid them

Edition 4

By Mick Schilling

The Background Isn't Blurred Enough/There are Distractions in the Background

We have already talked about obtaining a wide depth of field by stopping a lens down and reducing the aperture size. To get a blurred background we need to do the opposite; open the lens up and make it bigger to give a narrowed depth of field. This may seem simple at first, but there are other factors to consider:

- Get a background that is already smooth in tone and contrast – it will be easier to blur;
- Set the subject with the background a long way behind it and get as close to the subject as possible, this increases any blur effect on the background;
- Use a long lens – 200mm or more where possible. The telephoto lens will compress the differences between what is in and out of focus;
- Depth of field may be as little as a few millimetres at best, meaning it can be tricky work;

So ideally we would use a long lens with the subject as close as possible and the background as far away as possible. Once we have this arrangement, the aperture can be adjusted to give as much depth of field so as to allow as much of the subject to be sharp front to back, whilst keeping the background blurred. F8 or 10 can be used in the right conditions to produce a sharp leaf or flower with a nice smooth background.

In appreciation of our current spell of hot weather, here are some 'hot' jokes ...



Why are elephants always ready to swim on a hot day?

They always have their trunks with them!

What is always the brightest day of the week?

SUN day!

04

The Month of July ...

July is named for a mortal, albeit one who devised and ruled an empire – Julius Caesar. A Roman general, statesman, and historian who conquered Gaul (now part of Italy, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands), changed the structure of the Roman government into a dictatorship, was assassinated in legendary fashion, and most importantly for our purposes, helped make the calendar what it is today. July was named in his honour, *Quintilis*, his birth month, was renamed *July* when he died. *Quintilis* means “fifth month” in Latin, which represents where the month originally fell in the Roman calendar.

Caesar is responsible for the year as we know it having 365 days, and for the existence of a leap year every four years – the Julian Calendar. July belongs to the zodiac signs Cancer (for those born between June 21 and July 22) and Leo (for those born between July 23 and August 22). Its birthstone is the ruby (which symbolises contentment) and its flowers are the blue delphinium (Larkspur) and White Water Lilly.



Notable days in July ...

23rd July-7th August – National Marine Week – celebrating the wildlife found in our seas and our relationship with the sea.

24th July – International Tequila Day

24th July – Samaritans Awareness Day

29th July – International Tiger Day – First held in 2010, the purpose of this day is to raise awareness of the decline of wild tigers, leaving them on the brink of extinction and to encourage the celebration of the important work of Tiger conservation.

29th July-5th August – Love Parks Week – An opportunity for people to celebrate their wonderful green spaces and support the efforts of volunteers to maintain and protect our green spaces. It provides a week of action for parks to run events in their local area.

30th July – International Friendship Day

And in celebration of Friendship Day here are some nice quotes about friends:

“A friend is one who overlooks your broken fence and admires the flowers in your garden.”

“A good friend is like a four-leaf clover: hard to find and lucky to have.” “True friendship comes when the silence between two people is comfortable.”



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05

“But It’s Just a Dead Flower!”

By Jenny Ladbrooke

This was my mother’s reaction to this photograph which did okay in last year’s competition and indeed even got into a BPE exhibition, much to my surprise. My mum just sees a dead flower, we photographers see so much more.



It’s a classic still life image and I’ve been submitting quite a few of these and a number of people have asked me how I produce them.

Now I need to add here that in sharing with you how **I do this** it is not necessarily the way you **should do it**. In fact I’m sure many people have better ways of producing still life images more reliably than I do but in the interests of sharing some ways of doing things here goes.

My interest in still life kicked off during the second full lockdown in Spring 2021. By then any novelty of being locked down, unable to meet people, stuck indoors because it’s winter had definitely waned. An advert popped up for an online course by Joel Grimes on still life. The cost was pretty reasonable, the price of a meal out, something I certainly wasn’t doing at that time so I paid up.

It was a great course and got me started on still life and gave me some photographic purpose during that very sterile time. It also gave me quite a few images I could use in competitions so no bad thing there.

Now there is a word of warning here. I’m sure people can take still life’s straight out of camera but I think some photo editing ability is definitely helpful. I use Photoshop a lot but then I probably overdo it!

These are my tips for still life that have worked for me at least.

Lighting:

I don’t use lights normally just relying on daylight coming through our large patio windows. I avoid times when the sun is streaming in as the light is just too strong. But for me that means waiting until it’s overcast or the afternoon. I have found that side light is quite effective but when the light has failed I do use a daylight standard lamp I’ve got. This is an image of a typical set up complete with cat and her toys. Normally our cats are evicted.....



Background:

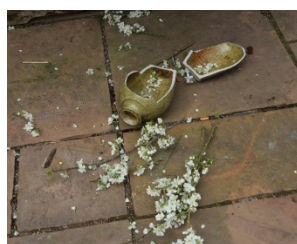
Joel Grimes recommends using a grey background - you can see it above. I bought mine from Amazon for c.£12 and it's just a large fairly rigid plastic sheet. Of course if I had a wall that was beautifully textured and wasn't cluttered by furniture/ornaments/family life I could use that but the grey background gives me a good solid background on which you Photoshop in textures and colours and so on. Apparently grey is better than white and black wouldn't take a texture.

There are ready-made backgrounds with a vast array of colours and textures. But they're pricey coming in at c.£30. I have some cheap nasty vinyl backgrounds but only use those if I'm going to really darken the background so you don't see how awful they are! You can get hand-painted backgrounds but they cost hundreds and as somebody who got a very poor grade in their art O-level I shan't be painting my own backgrounds. Alternatively you can use fabric as a background. Jolanta's lovely and successful magnolia image uses some voile for a soft look.



Equipment:

For indoor still life I find a tripod is essential but I guess if you were to set up the still life in the garden then it would be more possible to hand hold the camera. But of course the wind may make your still life less still and accidents happen like this vase meeting an untimely end! Using a conservatory would be ideal for keeping the wind at bay.



As to lenses I have used my kit lens but more recently have found that my very best lens gets better results. Not, on reflection, a huge surprise! I sometimes use focus stacking as well but it's not essential. If I had a 50 mm prime, I'd use that but I don't so I usually use my 100mm macro although I have to push the television out the way!

Subject Matter:

So what to photograph? Props are a key part. Flowers are always a good go to and freely available if you have a garden or they are pretty cheap from the supermarket. An interesting vase or other elements really help. During lockdown last year there was no chance to rummage around charity shops so eBay provided a number of cheap vases. But it surprised me actually how many items I already had in the home I could use. Now we can get out, charity shops have some interesting things and when round at friends I'm not ashamed to borrow from them if they have an interesting container or vase! I have even used fish in a recent composition and my lovely fishmonger did a slight double take when I said I was looking for the most photogenic fish he had!

The image below was part of an Old Master Easter Challenge that Jane Lazenby ran. Incidentally, I can't recommend these free challenges enough. She runs them over Christmas and Easter. She's been to us a couple of times and I've learnt masses from her technique and style. This image has a fabric backdrop.



Composition:

Composition is the key to everything. It's what takes the time. This is where it can get quite tense because you're trying to persuade a leaf or a stem to do something it really doesn't want to do. I have found if you let the plants get thirsty they droop more and look better. But it's a fine line before they drop their petals though!!!

Here Blu-Tack/sellotape can be your friend. Then of course it has to be carefully photo shopped out. In the image with the white tulips below you can see the pear is being held up by a piece of Blu-Tack!

All the usual rules of composition apply like triangle formations, the rule of thirds and nothing looking like it doesn't fit or sticks out and catches the eye in a bad way.

I also find I need to look at the image on the computer screen to get an appreciation of whether the composition is working or not. While I have managed to tether my computer to my camera the link never lasts (I suspect it's because there are so many competing demands on our broadband feed from the children!). That would be perfect But, failing that, for me it means lots of taking the SD card out downloading images, checking what they look like going back rearranging over and over again. So this is the frustrating bit.

Post Processing:

There is a lot of post processing if you are using a grey background as you will need to introduce colour and texture and mask out the subject so they stay the right colour and only the background gets affected. If this is gibberish to you then please do ask me and I can show you how that works. It's not difficult. Here is a before and after of a vase of tulips with pears – yes spot the difference and the Blu-Tack!



This is the stuff I love but for others I know it is not what they want to do. In which case use a background that is already the colour/tone/texture you want. Brickwork can look lovely or a draped scarf/blanket. This image of apple blossom was taken against our back gate and fence but by darkening the background it looks like panelling.



Inspiration:

The classic inspiration are still life paintings like the Dutch Old Masters. I find Pinterest really helpful here. Lots of beautiful images to inspire me.

Another inspiration is a fantastic photographer called Jane Wiltshire. She is on Instagram under her name and is a photographer of all genres but I particularly love her still lifes. With her kind permission I've included a couple of them. On revisiting this article I did wonder whether I should slap underneath each one 'NOT MY WORK' but then it struck me that looking at them you would already know that!!!

Jane has taken the genre to a completely new level and shares her knowledge in workshops which are just a bit too far afield for me. Unsurprisingly her images do very well in exhibitions. So plenty for me to do further develop. Anyone got a skull I could borrow?



06

Photography Podium

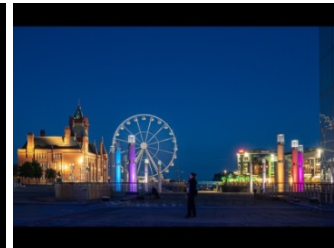
Here's a round-up of the results from our recent competitions.

'Colour Competition'

What a colourful evening of photographs we had with the audience voting for their favourite images as follows:



1st – 'Frozen Rose'
Jenny Ladbrooke



2nd 'Cardiff Bay at Night'
Phil Moorhouse



3rd – 'Pegs'
Dave Venables

'Photofolio'

Shirley entered 15 DPis into Photofolio. 9 were accepted: 2 each from Jenny and Jolanta and 1 from Mick Schilling, Jane Roby, Chris Lee, Tim (HC) and Chris Mallett (HC).

I think you will agree, our 6th place in the Open Projected Image Class in the rankings is an excellent result!

'Our next Competition'

Another challenge for you

For our first session back in the Methodist Church Hall on Thursday 8th September, we plan to host a *Members' Choice* evening showcasing the photography of our own members. The format will be:

1. Each member can send up to 4 favourite images, not necessarily competition winners, but maybe something conjuring up a special memory, or remembering a special place or an image with a personal significance. Competition winners/Exhibition successes are equally welcome.
2. Each image should be accompanied by a brief description, perhaps where it was taken, when it was taken, why it is special. No need to write a Wikipedia entry!, just 3 or 4 lines occupying no more than about 30 seconds to read. Send the text in the body of your email, with the pictures attached to the usual address: shirleyphotos@hotmail.co.uk, with 'Members Choice in the Subject line.
The usual resolution of 1600 x 1200 is perfect.
3. Phil will compile a video to present your contributions on the night, with a voice-over.



Entry: 4 images, any subject, any theme, any year
Email: shirleyphotos@hotmail.co.uk
Format: 1600 x 1200 ideally, Title-Author-01.jpg
Deadline: Thursday 25th August midnight

Example commentaries:

'This is the pier at Bournemouth Beach photographed by AN Other, a classic example of a Victorian Pier, home to a Theatre, Amusement Arcades , Cafes and Kiosks. This image reminds me of those childhood summer holidays spent on the beach. The days were long and hot and we played on the sand until late, whilst being sunburnt to a cinder!'

'This is a shot of a rare Black Wildebeest (or Gnu) photographed by NH Author on safari in South Africa. Let's face it the Wildebeest is never going to win any beauty contests, with its short neck, beard and skinny legs, but they are a rare sight and I was delighted to look at the back of my camera to find this shot was pin sharp.'

'This is a treasured shot of my dad enjoying a pony ride with his granddaughters on the beach at Pendine Sands. Pendine Sands, made famous as the location for numerous world land speed records, including Malcolm Campbell's record-breaking 146mph in 1924. Happily my dad, on-board Major Tom, didn't break any speed records. The photo is by'

07

External Recognition

If any of you enter any competitions and get any external recognitions like this then please drop me a line so that I can add it into the Newsletter. It's great to see what everyone is up to and the accolades they receive.



See you in August