

FOCUS



SCHENECTADY PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY NEWS

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Number 3

Van Dyke printing process to be presented at print group meeting

Photo © Christina Florada



Christina Florada, the print group speaker on Wednesday, December 6th, became passionate about photography at the age of sixteen when she would “borrow” her mother’s brand new birthday gift, a camera,

and go out to photograph wildlife. Mrs. Florada went on to study photography, receiving her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the College of Saint Rose in Albany, New York. She also studied at Southampton College in Southampton, NY and studied abroad at the Winchester School of Art in England and Miskolc University in Hungary. Through her studies, Mrs. Florada became fascinated with the world of Alternative Process, taking a special

interest in the VanDyke process. She went on to expand on the VanDyke, incorporating screen printing and print transfers into some of her work. After graduating, she further

Please see Florada page 3

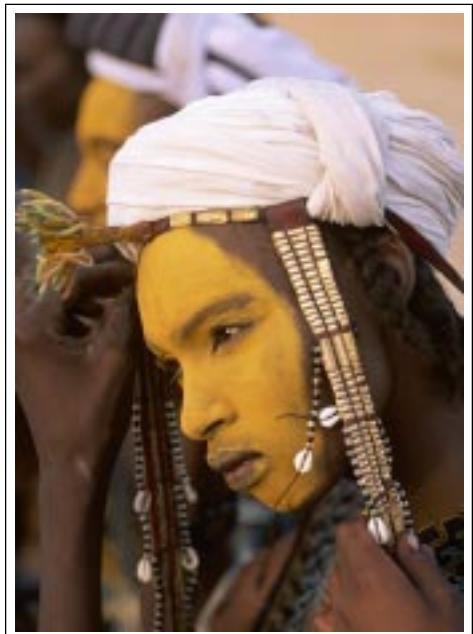
Physician will share her travel experiences and images at the slide group meeting

Photo © J. Thalia Cunningham

J. Thalia Cunningham, MD is an emergency physician, journalist, and photographer who has visited 82 countries to date. Her articles and photographs have appeared in *Arthur Frommer's Magazine*, *Diversion*, *Specialty Travel Index*, and other national publications.

Dr. Thalia Cunningham tries to promote infrequently-traveled and untouristed destinations, particularly in the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia. As a physician, she founded Emergency Physicians Abroad, an organization delivering medical care and training in Afghanistan, the only country she has visited 7 times. Recent assignments and travels have taken her to Ethiopia,

Please see Cunningham page 3



Digital camera essentials

The following article is reprinted with permission from Photoxels - www.photixels.com/fundamentals.html The author is Yin Wong.

Megapixels Resolution

How many [megapixels resolution](#) should your digital camera be able to capture? The more pixels you have, the larger the prints you can print. Consider the following table, and the answer becomes obvious:

Megapixels	Print Size
2	4x6 in.
3	8x10 in.
4	11x14 in.
5	20x30 in.

It is not just a matter of print size, for you may not want to ever print your pictures. The print size gives you an indication — serves as a proxy for — the quality of the image you can capture. Here at Photoxels, we recommend that you consider only digital cameras with 3+ Megapixels resolution. This way, you will never regret capturing that superb shot — but due to the low resolution of your digital camera, it does not display or print like the way you saw it in the viewfinder or on the LCD.

The higher megapixels also allows you to crop and enlarge ('digital zoom') your original image in an image editing software without noticeably losing too much quality.

[Editor's note: A note of caution is necessary here. The megapixels resolution of a digital camera is the number of pixels

it uses to capture an image. In general, the more megapixels, the more detailed the image that is captured. However, the captured image is then saved, usually as a jpeg file which is compressed. Most digital cameras allow you to specify the amount of compression to use: the less the compression, the bigger the file and the more detailed the image saved; the more the compression, the smaller the file and the less detailed the image saved. However, many beginner cameras do not give you that option and save the image with a lot of compression. So, even if a digital camera is advertised as 5MP and theoretically you should be able to obtain a 20x30 in. print from it, the truth of the matter is that it may save its final image with too much compression to provide the amount of detail necessary to print such a large print.]

Storage Media

How much storage media is enough? Some beginners wonder why people get so hung up with large storage media when we previously could at most capture 36 exposures on film? They're wrong, of course, because we were never satisfied with 36 exposures and carrying all those rolls of film in our pockets was a real bother. Pros attach a film back to their SLR, giving them hundreds of exposures. Wonder why they would do such a thing?

Anyway, a good rule of thumb is the following: at least 128MB for a 3 megapixel digital camera and at least 256MB for a 4 megapixel digital camera. The reason that 'bigger is better' is because it's a real bother to change film or memory card (it usually happens when things just start to get interesting around you) and you risk missing a good picture. After all we are talking digital here, so forget the past. There's just no good reason to change memory cards. Having said that, it is always a good idea to have a spare memory card with you in the odd and rarest of unlucky chance that the first one should stop working for any reason (when this kind of rarest of event happens to you, it is a good time to go out and purchase a lottery ticket).

You also want to shoot at the highest resolution at all times, which means that you *need* all the storage space you can get. Shooting at the highest resolution allows you to print a nice sized 8x10 inch photograph to hang on your wall or to crop a smaller part of the picture and blow it up without loss of quality.

Please see Photixels page 3

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Photixels

Continued from page 2

Maximum Aperture

Why should you care what the maximum aperture is? Simple, the maximum aperture decides how much light your camera lets in to record the picture. The larger it is, the more light gets in, thus allowing you to shoot in a bigger range of lighting situations. With a large enough aperture, you could shoot on a cloudy day without the use of flash; you could shoot action pictures using a fast shutter speed; you could shoot portraits and throw the background out of focus.

If the maximum aperture is small to start out with, you can only shoot in a limited range of lighting situations, and would be overly relying on the flash to provide enough light to properly expose your shots. And more often than not, the camera flash is pretty weak and useful mainly as fill-in flash. You would be using slow shutter speeds which means that action shots without flash would be impossible. Slow shutter speeds also mean that any movement on your part (i.e. camera shake) results in blurred pictures.

Some digital cameras have a limited aperture range. Instead of an iris that opens (larger aperture, more light gets in and less depth of field) and closes (smaller aperture, less light gets in and more depth of field) in increments, they might have only 2 preset aperture settings. In fact, some might not have an iris at all, which means that you cannot really control depth of field. The aperture might be “electronically controlled” by moving a filter into the light path to cut off the amount of light reaching the image sensor; this, in effect, simulates a smaller aperture setting but depth of field is not affected. Is this good or bad? Well, the jury is still out on this one. Technically, 2 preset apertures with no ability to control depth of field is a limiting factor for those who want to explore digital photography, but if such a camera takes superb pictures, and you’re just interested in point-and-shoot, then who is to complain? Keep an open mind, and don’t judge a digital camera only by its features — it’s the picture quality that counts in the final analysis.



“This is only a test”

Howie Johannessen

At last year’s annual banquet it was announced that the slide group was going to devote two of its seven monthly meetings to projecting digitally submitted slides. This experiment is not intended to be an indication of an inevitable change to the structure of the slide group program. The future look of the slide group is a separate matter for the Board to consider.

We have targeted **January** and **February** as the two months which will be solely for digitally submitted images. These will likely be submitted via e-mail to the SPS web site and from there downloaded onto a computer for judging at these two monthly meetings. There will be no assigned topics for these two months, entries will be of a general category. The topics assigned for January and February will be doubled up in the months of March and April, respectively. **Details will be forthcoming at our December meeting and in the January Focus. Stay tuned!**

Florada

continued from page 1

explored the idea of making large VanDyke prints of landscapes by combining digital technology with an old fashioned process. Mrs. Florada is currently working on a series of VanDyke prints of landscapes photographed in Ireland. She hopes to inspire others to explore the world of alternative process and combine it with today’s digital technology.

The VanDyke process is one of MANY alternative processes. Alternative processes consist of alternative ways of printing (not in the darkroom); for example, VanDyke, Cyanotype, Salt Printing, Albumen printing, Gumprinting, etc. Mrs. Florada dabbled in Cyanotypes and Gumprinting, but currently, she only prints VanDykes.

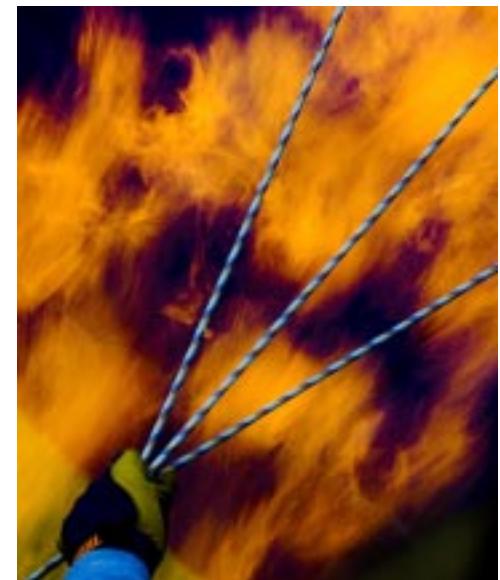
Cunningham

continued from page 1

Niger, Afghanistan, Dubai, and Libya, where she traveled prior to lifting of the US sanctions.

As physician as well as photographer, Cunningham particularly delights in the human race, in all its permutations and idiosyncrasies.

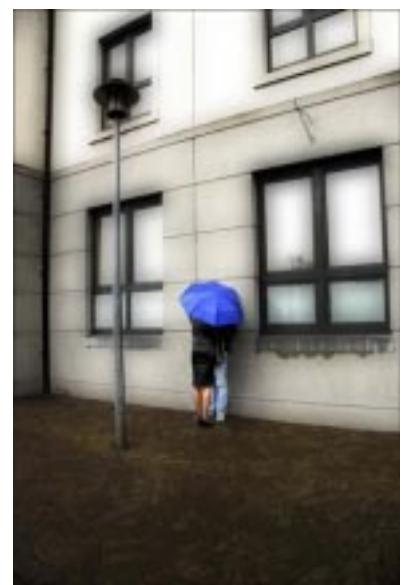
Please join us on Wednesday, December 13th to hear about Dr. Cunningham’s varied experiences and see her incredible images.



November's First Place Photos

Fire in the Hole
Bernie Herman

Seize the Day
Barbara Lawton



Sunfish Pond
Ken Deitcher

Vortex
Kevin Sarsfield



Setting Sun with Weeds
Jeff Plant

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November Competition Results

Prints

Color 30 Entries

* Barb Lawton	Seize the Day	1
Sandra Conklin	Battered Barn Boards	2
Kevin Sarsfield	Still Dwellers	3
John Saville	Platte Clove Creek	4
Jeff Perkins	Lensbaby, Ray, Lensbaby!	5
Nick Argyros	Venice	H M
Connie Bush	Pumpkins	H M
Bernie Herman	Sour Puss	H M
Barb Lawton	Harwitch Harbor Rowboats	H M
Linda Wroble	Under the Veil	H M

Monochrome 15 Entries

** Ken Deitcher	Sunfish Pond	1
Kevin Sarsfield	Ancient Hasp	2
Max Tiller	Catch Basin	3
Jeff Perkins	Curves of a Woman	H M

Assigned Fire 10 Entries

*** Bernie Herman	Fire in the Hole	1
Sue Gersten	Burn	2
Ray Henrikson	Dancer and Fire	3

Judge: Tom Bessete

Program: Gary Weitzman / The art of framing prints

Winner's Notes:

*The photo was taken in Galway, Ireland on the only rainy day Barb had in the nine days she was there. It was handheld with a Nikon D200 camera and Nikon 18-200 VR lens. The camera's WB was set to Cloudy and Optimize Image was set to Vivid. The photo was adjusted in Photoshop CS2 with levels and curves. She selected the couple and umbrella to keep them sharp, inverted the selection, then added a slight Gaussian Blur to the rest of the picture.

**This winning infra-red photo was taken in the morning with a Minolta D'Image 7 with an infra-red filter. A tripod was used and the exposure was 1/2 sec @ f16. Only manipulation done in the computer was to increase the contrast.

***Bernie took this winner with a Nikon D200 and a Nikor 18-200 VR lens. It was hand held at 1/160 f13 with the ISO set to 400. It was an overcast day at the Queensbury Balloon Festival.



Slides

General 16 Entries

* Jeff Plant	Setting Sun with Weeds	1
H. Johannessen	Bottle in a Window	2
Ken Deitcher	Mannequins	3

Assigned Moving Water 12 entries

** Kevin Sarsfield	Vortex	1
Luba Ricket	Cascading	2
Budha	Sunbathing Sprinklers	3

Judge: Jim Craner

Program: Dr. Jun David / Himalayan Adventures

Winner's Notes:

*This winner was taken with a Nikon F100 on a tripod, a Sigma 400 macro lens and Velvia 50 film. The setting sun reflected off the weeds on the Mohawk River.

**Kevin writes: Well, I'm never one to wait to the last minute, so it was but 2 days before the competition that I realized that I had not shot a slide for Moving Water. So, off to the local tributary of the Wynantskill, Nikon F4S with the 180/2.8 in hand, filled to the brim with a roll of 36 exp. Velvia.

A trusty tripod provided adequate support, despite the moss-covered rocks along shore. I waited until the light was very overcast - approaching dusk - so that extended exposure times were possible. Several compositions seemed OK, but not really inspiring. However, as I began to look for isolated static subjects among the swirling water, I felt better about the possibilities. The sole leaf - about to plummet over the edge - looked interesting. Bracketing a full stop on either side of metered exposure insured a usable slide. Final exposure of 4 seconds @ f22 yielded the best image. Next time, I'll prepare way-in-advance (maybe 4 or 5 days...)

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What makes a winning photograph?

Ken Deitche

What makes a winning photograph is largely subjective. However, there are several factors that separate an excellent photo from the average photos. Here are some common-sense qualities desirable in a photograph, as well as some red flags that may be considered as strikes against a photo.

Composition

Desirable qualities

Level horizon A landscape photo, especially one with a water horizon, such as an ocean or lake, is far more pleasing with a level horizon, unless the photo is tilted intentionally and dramatically for effect.

Attractive subject position A photo is always more interesting if the subject is placed off-center or in such a way to give a sense of the environment in which the subject exists.

An exception to this may be a macro photo where the subject fills the frame and the background is subtle anyway. However, even the color of a blurred background can act as an attractive and visually inviting space which would be blocked by a centered subject.

A common compositional guideline is the “rule of thirds.” Imagine a grid - like a simple tic-tac-toe board - drawn across your photo, dividing it into thirds horizontally and vertically. The horizon line in the photo should be near one of the horizontal lines of the grid, not through the very center of the image. Optimum subject placement on the grid is at or near any of the four points where the lines cross, not in the very middle of the frame. As with all guidelines, excellent images can also be made that break this rule. Know the guidelines, but don’t be constrained by them.

Strong diagonal Photos with bold, diagonal elements evoke a sense of motion through the image or of dimension. This is a classic compositional element.

Simplicity A simple, unambiguous photo is a pleasure to look at. Filling the frame, composing clearly to emphasize the subject, using depth of field to de-emphasize the background, or using a plain background can make a potentially noisy and complicated picture very pleasing. Essentially, simplicity is seen in the ability of the photo to present its central subject.

Sharpness Older digicams are not capable of perfect sharpness and some allowances are made for that. However, it is undesirable if the subject is out of focus and some other minor detail is in perfect focus. Using a tripod and taking your time can make the difference between a mediocre photo and one that grabs you with its sharpness.

Undesirable qualities

Subject centered A common portrait mistake is to place the face in the center of the frame, making the person look chopped off. In other categories as well, if the subject is centered it usually indicates that the photo was not thoughtfully framed. There are exceptions, for example when centering the subject produces interesting symmetry or captures motion.

Subject does not fill the frame Unless the rest of the photo is part of the overall composition, the subject should fill or even overfill the frame. For example, an action photo of horses drawing a chariot where the action only occupies 1/3 of the frame leaves 2/3 of the frame with distracting, useless information. Wildlife photos often suffer from this problem since it is so difficult to get close.

Horizon tilted A frequent mistake in landscape photos is a non-level horizon. An exception to this is when the photo is intentionally tilted for drama or interest. However, slightly off-axis horizons, where it looks more like a mistake than intentional, are to be avoided.

Overly complex If a photo is composed with too many competing elements, the subject can become unclear. From a distance (or as a tiny thumbnail) the photo may appear to be noisy or just a texture rather than presenting the subject.

Exposure

Desirable qualities

High contrast while maintaining detail in bright and dark areas

Good color saturation (without being over-saturated and unnatural looking)

Undesirable qualities

Flat, low contrast

Under or over exposure

Improper color balance, color casts

Hot spots (glaring, overexposed white areas of a photo)

Welcome new SPS members

Jason Bryer	Sandra Conlin
Hong Kyu Cheon	Diane Deyoe
Craig Deyoe	Deb Budhaditya
Aimee Falk	Laurie La Fond
Joe Harrigan	Jack Hurley
Ross Mealey	Larry Moonan
Lance Nevard	Charles Nygard
Alexandra Payette	Michelle Payette
Judith Peck	Art Smith
Cecile Spellman	John Sullivan
Kevin Sullivan	Charles Szuberla

News You Can Use

New Member has photos at Gallery

Charles Szuberla, a new SPS member, had two photos accepted for the Perrella Gallery 2006 Regional at the Fulton-Montgomery Community College in Johnstown, NY. The Exhibit opens on November 17 and closes December 15.

Zebra Face. Photo by Charles Szuberla



Ken Deitche has photo on Internet

Ken Deitche had a photo chosen for display on the Photo Workshop.com Double Exposure Animals site.

SPS members visit Eastfield Village

October 21st, 2006 twelve SPS members gathered to spend the morning photographing Eastfield Village, created and maintained by Don Carpentier. Set in rural East Nassau Don has acquired a number of 18th Century and early 19th century buildings dismantling them and lovingly restoring them to their original condition. Each house building is equipped with period artifacts. We all had a delightful time in the lovely fall light, retiring to lunch in a nearby local restaurant.

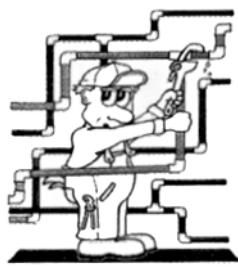
*SPS members at Eastfield Village
Photo by Jim Craner*

Fine Art Photography Exhibit to be held in January

“Photographic Works by Four” – an exhibit of Fine Art Photography by Nora Adelman, David Jeffery, Rob Near and Bob Ricketson. An exciting collection of personal work by four talented local photographers. Each individual was free to select and display their images in all respects. The result is an interesting mix of differences and similarities – in both techniques and themes.

Dates for the show are January 2nd to January 30th in the Blue Hill Gallery located at Columbia Greene Community College, Route 23, Hudson, NY. The phone number is (518) 828-4181. The Gallery hours are Mon – Thurs 8am to 7 pm, Friday 8 am to 5 pm. Weekends 1pm to 5 pm.

Opening reception is January 9th – 7pm to 9pm in the gallery.



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alendar

Wednesday, December 6

ke printing process / Christina Florada
Spider webs

Wednesday, December 13

Slide group: Travel experiences / Dr. Thalia Cunningham
Assigned: Shoes

Wednesday, December 20*

Digital: Common retouching problems and creating panoramas

Wednesday, December 27

No meeting. Happy Holidays

Meetings are at 7:30 p.m.

*Board meetings are at 6:30 p.m.



The *Focus* is published nine times a year by the Schenectady Photographic Society. The organization meets each Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. from October through May to promote and present informative programs, activities and competitions in the photographic arts for photographers throughout the Capital District. Members range from novice to expert.

Annual dues are \$30.00 for individuals and families. The *Focus* newsletter is included in the membership dues. SPS meets at the First United Methodist Church, 603 State Street, Schenectady, New York. Parking and entrances are on Chapel Street, a one way street off Nott Terrace. Guests are welcome at all regular meetings.