FOCUS

SCHENECTADY PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 74 April 2005 Number 7

Print Group to Hear Carrie Will

Corresponding Rikki

They say twins start learning how to speak later than most babies do. Twin babies can communicate with each other silently and effortlessly. Developing the ability to talk when you can already easily communicate with your twin waits until the need is more pressing. The connection, communication, similarities and differences of my twin sister and I are what my photographs are about.

I have always loved writing letters and keeping a journal. It's always been cathartic for me to sit and write when I need to clear my head or make sense of something. I wasn't sure why I started photographing paper and handwriting but soon I realized that the most personal and best writing I do is in letters I write to Rikki, my twin sister. I began photographing the letters we paper and tried to translate that into portraits. No one knows me better than my twin sister. That is what this body of work should convey, a silent connection though writing, of two minds.

Carrie Will received her Bachelor's of Fine Arts degree in photography from Purchase College SUNY in January 2001. Since then she has worked as a content editor at a stock photography agency in NYC and she has had her work displayed in a numbered of juried and group shows. Carrie takes pictures with a 4x5 view camera

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Helen Cath, Pet Photographer:

Sometimes things are just meant to be

by

Jeffrey Meyers

The story of Helen Cath, pet photographer, is a series of events that were simply meant to be. Some of these events were unfortunate, but the vast majority have been incredibly fortunate. Whatever the reasons, pet photography has given Helen a sense of pride, a loving following, and an open heart.

Helen received her first camera when she was fifty years old. That's right, *fifty*. The way she explains it, her husband didn't know what to get her for the holidays that year, so he bought her a disk-style camera. Her first reaction was to think to herself: "What the heck am I going to do with this? We don't travel, and that's when people take photographs, isn't it?" She didn't want to make her husband feel badly, so she looked around to see what she could photograph to make her husband happy. It didn't take her long to realize that she could photograph her beloved dogs. She put a few "rolls" of film through the camera and had them developed. She was pretty happy with what she saw, but she wanted to make large prints, and the small negative format of her disk camera was simply not going to cut it.

She spoke to a friend who recommended a point-and-shoot 35mm camera. Then Helen had, what could only be described as, one of those magic

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moments. She was taking photos of her cat sitting in a chair and she got close in. In the cat's eye, she could see the reflection of the window and the trees in her back yard. Helen was hooked. She liked the photograph so much that she had it enlarged to 16x20, and she still has it hanging on her wall today.

With her interest high, she realized that she really wanted the ability to zoom. She went out and purchased an SLR, but didn't really know how to use it. She attended a night class, 10 classes in all, but she was only able to attend 3 or 4 classes because around this time, her husband was diagnosed with cancer. Because she was exhausted taking care of her husband and shuffling back and forth from the hospital, she wasn't able to get too much out of the class, but she did pick up basics – like keeping an eye on what is in your background.

She loved that photograph of her cat so much that she went to a pet store and asked whether people would like to have portraits taken of their pets. The pet store owner enthusiastically said "Yes," and Helen had her first shoot. At that event, Helen met a representative from Fromm dog and cat food who thought it would be a great idea to have Helen join her on trips to pet stores where the representative would introduce the food products and Helen would be there to offer a portrait day. Helen then traveled with her, expenses paid, and things were really rolling.

Around this time, Helen spied a calendar that had cats and dogs on it in her pet store. The store owner insisted that Helen's work was better than any of the photos in the calendar, and suggested that she enter her work. She called the calendar makers, a husband and wife working out of their home, and asked if she could submit some photos for critiquing. She never heard anything. *Eighteen* months later, she received her photographs in a big envelope without so much as a letter, and she was crestfallen. *The very next day, she received a letter stating that they were going to use 15 of the photographs she sent in!* While she was thrilled, she was also terrified – some of the photographs were five or six years old and she had to call the pet owners to get signed releases. In fact, Helen was even awarded the cover page, and the pet owner wasn't sure she wanted to sign! Thankfully, she did, and so Helen was published. To date, Helen has over 1,000 images published in calendars and pet-breeding magazines. Her work has been so admired that she has even been hired to attend dog shows. Helen travels to the "Siberian Nationals" (which has been in Dallas, Chicago, and Connecticut) and holds 30 or 40 sittings for adoring pet owners.

Even with so much of her work published, Helen insists that she is not a "true" photographer. Helen modestly claims that the cameras are so good these days, they do all the work for her. Helen uses auto-focus cameras because the animals are always moving, and because her eyesight isn't all that great any more. In fact, she tells a story of being away in Rutland, Vermont for a weekend of shooting pets, when she inadvertently stepped on her glasses and broke them beyond repair. Even though she couldn't see clearly, she took an entire day's worth of shots using her Canon EOS 3 in auto-focus mode, and maintains that not one was blurry.

Helen has never been into the technical aspects of photography. In fact, her local developer told her once that she was the only photographer he knew who didn't know the difference between an f-stop and a bus stop! Helen shoots 200 ASA color print film and has never shot black and white. She says that she read an article once that recommended using 400 speed film, but she believes that with studio lights, 200 is better as it provides the ability to make better enlargements. She shoots f/8 at 125 and maneuvers the lights until she can get that reading. But Helen's favorite piece of equipment is a rolling Igloo cooler! She can roll the cooler, stuffed with her film and camera equipment, right to her site. Then she uses the cooler as a perch at pet level which she can easily roll as she is photographing – perfect!

Over the last fifteen years, Helen has taught herself how to photograph pets. Helen really loves animals, and it is that love, she insists, that has helped her with her endeavors. Even today, when beginning a shoot, Helen is nervous. After all of this time and after thousands of images, her biggest fear is disappointing a customer or, even worse, the person who recommended her. Of course, it is always the pet

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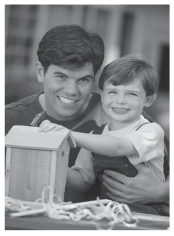
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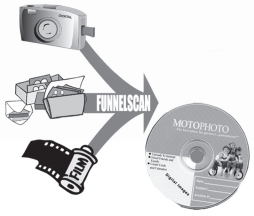

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owner with the four unruly large dogs who has several impossible poses in mind! Thankfully, as soon as she picks up her camera, it feels like an extension of her body, and as she begins shooting away, those fears disappear. Helen never lets money stand in the way of making her customers happy; sometimes she doesn't make as much as she would like, or even loses a little money, but she is willing to do that to make people happy. Fortunately, she always manages to capture at least a few pleasing images.

When reflecting upon Helen's career, one realizes that it is a series of events that has led Helen down her path. That holiday gift that Helen's husband bought for her was perhaps the greatest gift he could have given her. Sadly, while Helen's husband died of cancer, he gave her a gift that has allowed Helen to blossom and pursue something she didn't even know she would like, let alone love. The gift ignited something inside of her and has allowed her to spread her love of animals to the world. And, fortunately, Helen gets love right back from adoring pet owners who welcome her with open arms whenever she comes to set up her mobile photography shop.

Please join us on April 13, 2005 and learn some of Helen's tricks for capturing good pet images. Find out why Helen brings a small platform to all of her shoots, what Helen does with her armpit that always manages to get a dog's attention, and why she always places her back to the door!

Will

Continued from page 1

and continues to work as a fine arts photographer in Troy, NY.

In addition to discussing her own work, Carrie will also talk about large format photography and about stock photography. The tiltw of Carrie Will's presentation is "Corriesponding Rikki"

Digital Darkroom Workflow – The Final Steps

by Jim Craner

Your image has been captured, and optimized to perfection, and archived for safe keeping. All that work is brought to fruition when the image is prepared for display. Whether the image is destined for a web page, a slide show, or display as a fine-art print – the last few steps are critical to success.

In my April 20, 2005 presentation for the digital group, I will illustrate image resizing and sharpening using Adobe Photoshop™, and discuss some important variations appropriate to different types of images and common forms of output. Jumping directly to the end of the workflow begs the obvious question, so let me start with a review of the steps needed to first optimize your image. The workflow described below applies, for the most part, to all versions of Photoshop including Elements™.

Photoshop Workflow Notes

Capture the image either in-camera or as a scan.
Usually a TIF, JPG, or proprietary RAW file.

Open the image in Photoshop and crop as needed.
Eliminates pixels that do not need to be considered in remaining steps.

Optional. Perform a 'light' sharpening on a copy of the base image layer.
Use very low **Radius** and **Threshold** settings. **Amount** is set high – typically around 300. Sharpening may be done in-camera.

Take care of any cloning that is needed to correct image defects – dust, blemishes, etc.
Do this on an adjustment layer.

Create any selections that will be needed for later image optimization.
Selections are saved in Photoshop as part of the image file for later use.

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Create and modify adjustment layers for Layers, Curves, Color Balance, etc., as needed

Photoshop Workflow (Cont'd)
Notes

A **Hue/Saturaton/Brightness** adjustment layer is also typically used.

Perform dodging and burning on an adjustment layer as need to further expand tonal range.
Layer is set to Overlay mode, and filled with 50% grey. The **Paintbrush Tool** is used.

Save the image will all layers intact as a .PSD file.
This becomes the archival 'master' image file from which all output is produced.

(Note: In PS Elements, some of the above steps can only be performed on an image layer.)

When you are ready to output an image from your digital master file start Photoshop, open the file, and resume the workflow with imaging resizing and sharpening.

Make a copy of the open image by selecting **Image>Duplicate**, and close the master file.
Protects against inadvertently saving a working image over the master image file.

Flatten the copy of the image.
Creates a single image layer containing the results of all adjustments.

Render the image in its final size and resolution by selecting **Image>Size** and completing the options in the dialogue box.
Prior to this step, but **AFTER** flattening, 16 bit images may be converted to 8 bits (PS 8.0 only) with no loss in quality.

Sharpen using **Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask**.
Leave Preview at 100%, Typical settings are Amount=100-115, Radius=0.7-1.0, and Threshold=1-2, but these vary with the image.

Output the image as appropriate. Usually to the printer, or to a file as a JPG.
Typically the working image is not saved.

The Mysteries of Sharpening

Digital images, whether scans or captures, appear alarmingly unsharp at first glance. This is almost entirely due to anomalies in sensor design, and the fact that digital images are not continuous tone images as are their film counterparts. Rather, edges (lines) running through digital images are 'jagged' and therefore do not appear as distinct.

I say 'appear unsharp' because sharpness is in some respects a matter of perception. Images captured on Kodak's Tri-X film often just looked sharper than the same image captured on Kodak's Panatomic-X film – everything else being equal. This was for the most part a matter of the larger grain structure, and tonal curve characteristics inherent in Tri-X. In reality – when photographs of resolution charts were examined – the two films were equally good at resolving detail.

Images with distinct and 'contrasty' boundaries between tonalities appear sharper. In fact the apparently contradictory name, **'Unsharp Mask'**, given to the PS filter used to sharpen images derives its name from a very old darkroom technique. Two slightly out of register negatives of the same image are sandwiched together in order to make the edges in the image appear 'thicker' and more distinct. This technique makes the print appear sharper although in reality both the negatives from which the image is made are essentially identical.

The first thing to understand about the use of the **'Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask'** technique in PS is that it **will not** correct an image that is out of focus or blurred due to camera or subject movement. You will simply end up with an out-of-focus image that has more contrast between different adjacent tonal areas! The Unsharp Mask filter increases sharpness by increasing the contrast between adjoining areas of tonality – in other words at the edges. To use the Unsharp Mask filter with confidence, it is important to understand the singular effect of each control, as well as the way the controls interact to produce the end result. PS calls these controls **Threshold**, **Radius**, and **Amount**. Here's what each control does:

Control Use

Threshold (0-255)

Tells PS how much difference in tone must exist between adjacent areas before that boundary will be considered an 'edge'. A setting of 0 means almost no difference need exist, while higher settings indicate that more difference must exist. Typically this control is set low (0-3) although higher settings can be useful.

Radius (0-250)

The most important control. Radius tells PS over how wide an 'edge' area contrast should be increased. The higher the set-

March Competition Results

Prints

Color

***Jeff Perkins**	**A Sad Life**	**1**
Connie Bush	**Skylines**	**2**
Kim Koza	**Curley Tulip**	**3**
Jennifer Harvey	**Gates**	**4**
Jane Riley	**Wall Shadows**	**HM**
Kim Koza	**3 Tokens Per Play**	**HM**
Tony Hilferty	**National Bottle Museum**	**HM**
Tony Hilferty	**Gates Behind Tree**	**HM**

Monochrome

****Karl Becker**	**Untitled**	**1**
Frank Bunbardatore	**Old Chair**	**2**
Louie Powell	**Leather Gloves**	**3**
Jennifer Young	**Christian**	**4**
Karl Becker	**Disney**	**5**
Kevin Sarsfield	**Ready to Run**	**HM**

Assigned Topic

***** Jane Riley**	**Shadow on a Chair**	**1**
Stew Sacklow	**Flowers Glow**	**2**
Kevin Sarsfield	**Palmetto Forets**	**3**
Linda Heim	**The Rose**	**4**
Luba Ricket	**Blue Suede Boots**	**5**
Micheal Hime	**What the Heck is That**	**HM**
Luba Ricket	**Circularity**	**HM**
Nich Argyros	**Untitled**	**HM**

Winners Notes:

*Title: A Sad Life -Jeff Perkins

"Taken as a candid restaurant shot in Siracusa, Sicily with a Sony 828, 100mm, P mode , auto white balance, camera placed on table pointing toward subject and LCD rotated upward for composition. I was struck by the extreme sadness of this poor, lonely woman and had to capture her image."

**Untitled - Karl Becker

This black and white photograph of a tree bark. It was taken at the Arboretum in Deerfield Beach , Florida. My camera is a Minolta Maxxum 800si with a 28 to 200 mm lens. I used T-Max 100 film. The shape reminded me of a person's turso.

***Shadow on a Chair-Jane Riley

The photo was shot with a Nikon D100 on fine jpeg. with a Tamron 28-200 lens. I noticed the stacked plastic chairs on the porch were creating interesting shadows on the bottom chair so I shot the those graphic shadows and added the red stripe with Psp. The print was optimized with Psp CS.

Slides

Assigned: 12 entries

***Jean Burton**	**Untitled**	**1**
Connie Frisbee Houde	**We Fix Fast**	**2**
Karl Becker	**See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil**	**3**
Nick Argyros	**Can you see the letter M?**	**HM**

General: 28 entries

****Connie Bush**	**Sunrise**	**1**
Ray Hull	**Hutten Hook**	**2**
David Lilac	**Near Adler Meadow Pond 'a'**	**3**
David Lilac	**Durango Aspens**	**4**
Jeff Plant	**Sunset on Lake Durant**	**5**
Connie Bush	**Quiet Place**	**HM**
Warren Burton	**Untitled**	**HM**
Kevin Sarsfield	**Pollinator**	**HM**
Kevin Sarsfield	**Caught in the Act**	**HM**

Winners Notes:

*Untitled - Jean Burton

Working with the assigned topic of Text, Jean used her husbands glasses and typed text. Jean arranged the glasses on the text and with natural light, carefully hand held with elbows on table Jean took the shot with her Cannon EOS3 and a Macro Lense, using Elite Chrome by Kodak.

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ting, therefore, the 'thicker' the edge. Typical settings range from 0.3-1.7. Excessively high settings can result in unpleasing 'haloing' effects

Amount (0-500) Tells PS how much to increase the contrast. Typical settings are 75-115.

I will demonstrate in detail, and discuss, the use of these controls using two images that require very different sharpening approaches.

In general terms here is how to apply these controls to a 'typical' image – one that needs an approximately equal amount of sharpening to all areas of the image. In the overall digital workflow, final sharpening is applied to a flattened version of your master .PSD file, which has already been sized appropriately for its use. You may wish to fill the screen with the image before launching the filter.

Launch the **Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask** dialogue from the Filter Menu. It is always preferable to use the Unsharp Mask filter rather than the 'Sharpen', 'Sharpen More', or 'Sharpen Edges' options. In reality the same technique is being applied to the image, however PS is making important decisions about the settings for the three controls – judgments better made by the photographer. Check to insure that the preview window is set to 100%, which means that the image in the windows is being viewed close to actual output size. Leave the preview window at, or very close, to 100% for this procedure.

PS will load the last-used values for the three controls and the effects will appear in the preview window. By placing the cursor (which will appear as a 'hand') in the preview window and clicking, the effects of the current settings will be toggled on/off. By clicking and holding inside the preview window the image can be 'dragged' around and a different area exposed for preview. An alternative way to expose a different area in the preview window is to move the cursor (which will change to a rectangle) over the main view of the image and click on the new area you want to preview.

Begin with initial settings of perhaps Amount=50, Threshold=1, and Radius at the lowest setting allowed. The exact settings for Threshold and Amount are not critical, but keep Radius set low at the start. Using the slider, slowly increase Radius to about 1.0 and watch the effect in the preview window. Resist the impulse to watch the image in the main view window. While the changes are appearing in both places, the only generally reliable view of the changes will be in the preview window (at 100%). Move the Radius setting through a range of perhaps 0.3 to 1.5 and note the results. Take care not to set the Radius too high, as the image can quickly turn garish, with distracting halos, color/tone shifts, and excessive contrast distorting the image. When a pleasing radius setting has been achieved, adjust Amount until the amount of edge contrast change is appropriate to the image. Finally, the overall effect may be moderated, or toned down, slightly by increasing the Threshold setting; however you will likely reach a point of diminishing returns at values higher than 10-15. Finally, click OK to apply the changes permanently to the image.

Learning to use the Unsharp Mask controls with confidence will enhance your understanding of alternative sharpening methods, as well as such specialized PS Plug-Ins as Nik Sharpener™. Proper use of the Unsharp Mask filter will restore the inherent sharpness hidden in digital images (scans and captures). Prints from your master image files will rival, or exceed, the sharpness of the traditional prints from even the best film captures.

Useful Websites

Blue Pixel (www.bluepixel.net)

Computer Darkroom
(www.computer-darkroom.com)

Digital Photography Review
(www.dpreview.com)

Imaging Resource
(www.imaging-resource.com)

PhotoBlink
(www.photoblink.com

Photo.net
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PhotoPoints Photography Community
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About Photography
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Useful Websites

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(www.betterphoto.com)

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(photos.msn.com

Nature Photographers.net
(www.naturephotographers.net)

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(www.cardsbymel.com)

PC Photo
(www.pcphotomag.com)

Take Great Pictures.com
(www.takegreatpictures.com/digital)

Wet Pixel
(www.wetpixel.com)

Member News

Tuesday, March 1 was a very good day for **Bill Delanney**. He and his wife went to New York City to the Soho Photo Gallery to attend the opening show of the National Krappy Kamera Competition Show. They had a great time and met fellow competitors from all across the country, with hundreds more visitors.

When they got home, Bill was too tired to study the mail, but he did see an envelope from the Albany City Gallery. Next morning, he opened it and discovered that not only had one of his Holga Polaroid shots again been accepted, into show—this time our own Regional—but, that the organizers were asking his permission to put his photo of Empire State Plaza "Egg" on the invitation.

So, congratulations to Bill, for having two shots accepted, with one a finalist in a national competition, and now, one selected and prominently featured in our Regional Competition.

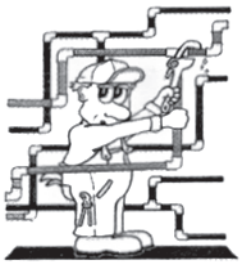
Photo Grab Bag

The Photo Grab Bag will be held this year in April with the judging to be on Wednesday, April 20th. Entries will be accepted and materials will be given out on Print Night, Wednesday April 6th, with an entry fee of $15.

Each entrant will be given a single roll of slide film and an assigned topic. They will be given a week to expose the film, which will be collected on Slide Night, Wednesday, April 13th. The processed slides will be returned to the entrants on Wednesday April 20th, and they will select their best images to be judged for competition. CASH prizes will be awarded to the winners! see Dave Lilac.

6th Annual Photo Retreat for Women

The 6th annual photo retreat for women will be held June 10-12,2005 at Hunter Mountain. The fee is $255 per person. Please contact Linda Buckman, 922-7011 or limda@empireone.net asap if you have questions or would like to reserve a spot. There are only two places still available.



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April Calendar

Wednesday, April 6	Print group: Corresponding Rikki / Carrie Will Assigned: Dirty Pictures
Wednesday, April 13	Slide group: Helen Cath, Pet Photographer: Assigned: High Key
Wednesday, April 20*	Digital: Sharpening techniques and preparing your image for printing/ Jim Craner Assigned: Sunrise or Sunset
Wednesday, April 27	Photo Essay of the year competition

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.