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FOCUS

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February 2021

**EVENT
NIGHT**

BEYOND THE GRAND LANDSCAPE: EXPANDING YOUR VISION TO INCLUDE NATURE'S SMALLER SCENES

*by Sarah Marino
February 17*

Nature photography is about so much more than epic grand landscapes. In this session, Sarah will teach you how to see beyond the grand scenes to expand your photographic opportunities, improve your observation skills, work with any kind of light, and bring diversity to your photo portfolio. Sarah will share a lot of examples, plus a few in-depth case studies, of intimate landscapes, abstract renditions of natural subjects, and portraits of plants and trees to inspire you to seek out small scenes next time you are outside with your camera.



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Rich Schreiberstein

“Stop and Dwell” Photography

No one has taken me up on the offer I made last month to join me in my jpeg journey to recapture the nostalgia of film photography. This is puzzling, as my ideas are overwhelmingly supported by whoever writes this column.

My argument was that jpeg photography, with a filmic look, is a way to relive that era when film was the only game in town. You didn't get a chance to manipulate your photos in post. When you opened your package of prints, what you saw was what you got. My challenge is to get it right in camera. This, I believe, will make me a better photographer. Not perfect, just better.

I've been an active photographer for 60 years, and I'm still not even sure what a perfect photograph is...probably because it is way too subjective to define. So, forget perfect; I'm just in search of a good photograph. As I review my catalogs, I find I'm not even getting a lot of good ones. To be honest, most of my photographs are just “meh.” I am, as are most photographers, my own worst critic. You should be quite critical of your own photography. If you're not, consider it akin to cheating at solitaire.

How do I define a good photograph, now that I've admitted I'm more “meh” than “good”? I ask myself if it's a “stop and dwell” photograph. Does it make me stop and investigate why it appeals to me? Honestly review your catalog. Be tough on yourself. Nobody else will, unless you pay them. Instagram and Facebook “likes” are meaningless. Is your catalog filled with a bunch of formulaic shots? Mine was.

Nothing makes me “stop and dwell” like street photography. Not landscapes, not still life, not composites. Great street photography brings me

screaming to a halt. I'm in awe of the iconic street photographers such as Henri Cartier Bresson, Garry Winogrand, Robert Frank, and Vivian Maier. Good street photography is difficult—incredibly difficult—to get right.

To me, capturing a street scene that can never be replicated is the ultimate of photographic challenges. However, street photographs by definition cannot be replicated. That moment, that angle, those elements, those people, those expressions, those gestures, that layering, will never again be captured in exactly the way I photographed them. But merely capturing a scene is no qualifier for greatness. What makes it great are the way those elements interact. Is there an expression, a gesture, an interaction that makes it compelling? Look up Henri Cartier Bresson's photo “Boy Carrying A Wine Bottle,” to see what I'm talking about.

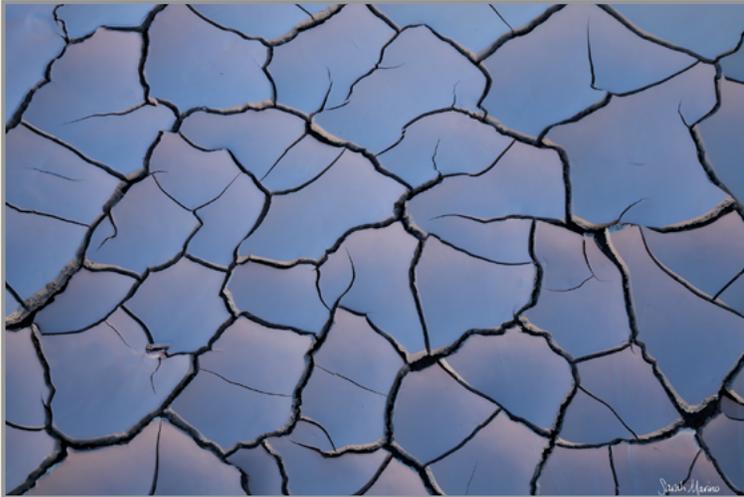
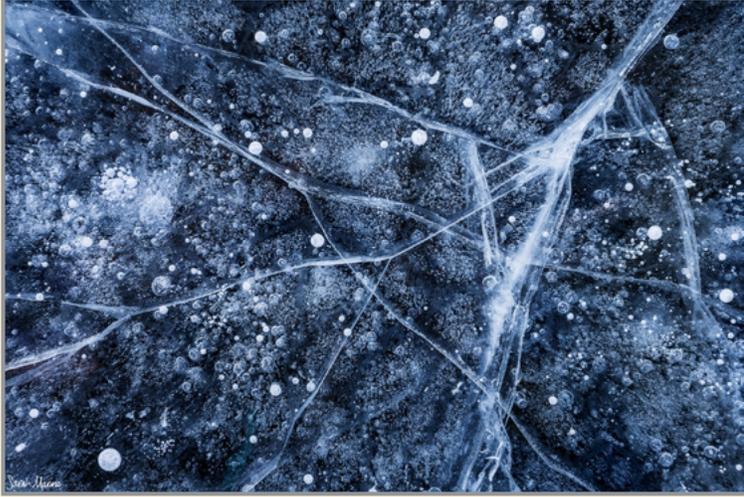
So, why would I set something as subjective and elusive as a good photograph as a goal? Well, self-admittedly, I don't get a lot of them, and goals are what keep me motivated. What's good to me is going to be completely different than what is good to you. How many of you have been disappointed when a photo you submitted to an SPS competition is the first one dismissed by the judge? You entered that photo because you thought it was good and the judge just dismissed your entry. Get used to it. That's going to happen a lot. Trust me, I know.

How you fare in competition is no indicator as to how you are faring as a photographer. Don't shoot only for competition, shoot to make good photographs that will make you and your viewers “stop and dwell.”

Rich

Beyond the Grand Landscape

(Continued from page 1)



Sarah Marino is a full-time nature photographer, photography educator, and writer who splits her time between a home base in rural southwestern Colorado and nomadic traveling in an Airstream trailer. Sarah's portfolio features a diverse range of subjects including grand landscapes, intimate landscapes, abstract renditions of nature, and creative portraits of plants and trees. Sarah's teaching, through speaking and in-person workshops, ebooks, and video tutorials, focuses on personal expression, seeing opportunities in any landscape, photographing nature's small scenes, and a slow style of photography focused on exploration and connecting with nature.

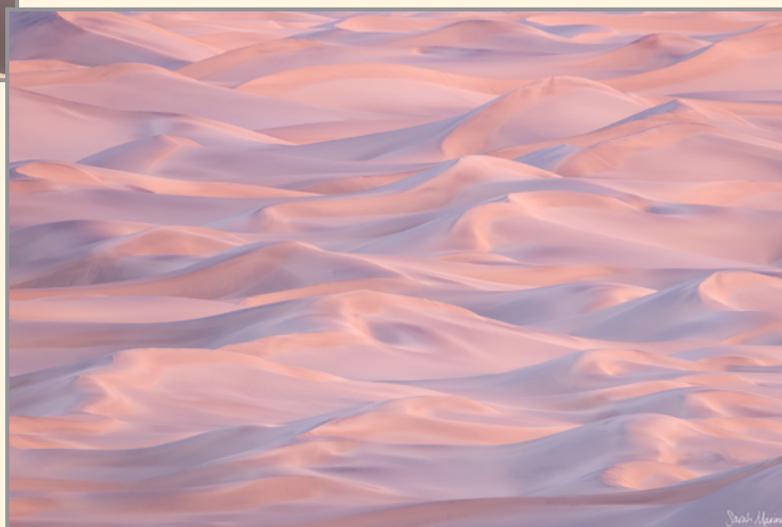
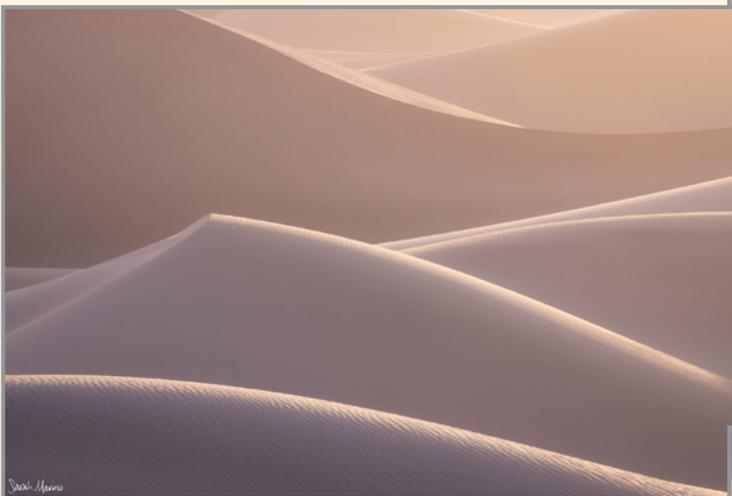
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Beyond the Grand Landscape

(Continued from page 3)

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Connect with Sarah in a number of ways...

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

by Nic Stover
February 24

Join professional landscape photographer Nic Stover for this session to talk about an area of photography seldom explored, The Psychology of Photography.

The psychology of photography goes beyond making pretty pictures and starts to examine the deeper questions beyond the creation of our images.

1. How are we drawn to patterns, shapes, lines, and what do they mean to our subconscious?
2. What is the relationship of these elements to our emotional response to scenes in the field?
3. What are the different schools of psychology and how the brain forms thoughts and how you can work with that.
4. What models of creativity can we look to follow and understand where we are in the creative process?
5. How does our formation of limited beliefs and our belief system dictate who we are as photographers?
6. Are there definable stages of our growth that we experience as photographers?
7. What are the types of biases and how do they influence our artistic and creative journey?



About Nic Stover

Nic Stover was raised in the high mountains of Western Colorado on a single magazine subscription to National Geographic and only five television channels, where the only shows his family regularly watched were Nature (PBS) and the Tour De France.

It was here that his love for adventure, the outdoors, and photography took shape.

Stover is based in San Luis Obispo, California and focuses on landscape photography classes and workshops encouraging his class participants to **Develop** their skills, **Explore** their capabilities, and to **Create** meaningful work.

Continued...

The Psychology of Photography

(Continued from page 5)



Learn more about Nic and his amazing images at: www.stoverphoto.com

Nic Stover Photography exists to help photographers understand the unique perspectives that assist in the discovery of their capabilities, while enabling a deeper connection with themselves and others through creative expression. Through his classes, webinars, tutorials, and presentations Nic works with people of all ages, backgrounds, experiences, and desires focused around a dialog on how we can thrive in our own unique creative and artistic process.

His landscape photography work has taken him across the globe — from the backcountry of Greenland, to the windswept mountains of Patagonia, and the frigid extremes of Alaska. His portfolio of work encompasses desert, ocean, night, and mountain photography. Nic also enjoys showcasing the amazing the places that are unique to the Central Coast, from sea caves to sand dunes, and its dramatic coastal landscapes.

Continued...

The Psychology of Photography

(Continued from page 6)

SUBMIT YOUR IMAGES FOR CRITIQUE!*

Join professional landscape photographer Nic Stover as we conduct a CONSTRUCTIVE and positive image critique / image review of participant submitted images with feedback from me and hands on demonstrations on how to make changes to your images in Lightroom for greater impact.



This will be mainly conducted in Lightroom with some minor modifications / highlighting of the times you might want to use Photoshop. Please submit your images ahead of the presentation to nic@stoverphoto.com there is no limit to the number of submissions but time will be limited so choose images that showcase your style of work, highlight a challenge in an image, or showcase where you want to bring out some compositional element but have been unable to bring forward.

Submissions can be made anonymously if you prefer and each image review is tailored to the image submission and where the photographer appears to be in their creative journey. The most impactful and compelling images are the those that have the proper balance of Technique, Vision, and Processing. All of these skills need to be developed and continually refined through our own artistic and creative process. My goal is not to shame anyone but rather to talk about my own journey and process to look at my images.

We gain nothing in these image reviews if we are not objective and constructive and focused around the intent of the image and the thoughts of the artist not focused on technical mastery or impeccable processing. We all have something to learn regardless of where you are on the photographic journey. Please join us to see!

YOU MUST REGISTER TO PARTICIPATE!

SPS Members will be emailed the registration link and email address to submit your photos.

*There is no limit to the number of submissions but time will be limited so choose images that showcase your best examples of composition or images where you want to bring out some compositional element but have been unable to bring forward.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: We may not be able to get to all images submitted, so choose judiciously.

REMEMBERING LINDA HEIM

by Kim Koza

Former SPS member Linda Heim would walk into her bathroom with a camera and one single flower, and come out with the most beautiful, award winning images you have ever seen. Her artistry was legendary, her images were spectacular. We referred to her as the "Flower Queen," a title she absolutely earned. Unfortunately Linda lost her battle with pancreatic cancer this week and we are all the less for it.

Linda was a retired gym teacher, a photographer, an SPS member and a dear friend to many. She held multiple roles at SPS, including President in 2002, and treasurer. She attended NECCC conferences for many years, and consistently won in their competitions with her flower images. She participated in our women's retreats, SPS photo retreats and Linda also held a Women's Day at Burden Lake every August which was always a day filled with great food, lots of laughter, photo shoots and wonderful friends. She was a fabulous Mom to her five children and an even better Grandmother to her five grandchildren.

Linda will be remembered for her crazy sense of humor, her laughter, her boundless energy, her kind demeanor and her endless smile. She brought such joy to so many, the loss is immense. We were blessed to walk this earth with her.

In loving memory of our dear friend, Linda Heim.

"If I had a flower for every time I have thought of you, I could walk in my garden forever."
Alfred Lord Tennyson



Remembering Linda Heim

(Continued from page 8)



FOCUS ON

Sean Sullivan

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In 2008 I moved to Schenectady and shortly after found the Schenectady Photographic Society. For me, that was a life changing event. The first meeting I attended was the Print Night competition and amazingly, I won first place for a monochrome print of the parents of the bride from a recent wedding I shot. This sealed the deal for me. I was hooked. My journey with photography was a long winding road.



1st Place Monochrome 2008

Looking back, my first camera was a Kodak Instamatic 124. I got it for my birthday when I was 10 from my uncle John (My father's youngest brother). For those of you who are old enough to remember the 124 was one of the models that used the 4-sided flash cubes and the 126 film cartridges. At the time, it was the newest model, and I took it everywhere. Of course, at 10, I had no clue what I was doing photographically and just shot whatever was in front of me. But, unlike today, the anticipation of going to the local photo shop to pick up your images was all part of the fun. Didn't matter if half



of them were blurry or over-exposed or everyone had red eye. It was just magical to a 10-year-old.

As I got older my brother (who is 13 years older) introduced me to the world of the photographic darkroom. He taught me how to develop and print black and white film. It was from him that I got my first real 35mm camera, a Pentax K1000. While it was an SLR it was a far cry from an Instamatic. During my teen years I learned about aperture, shutter speed, depth of field, ASO, and different types of film. It was enough to cement my interest in photography.

Unfortunately, when I was 17, the camera, along with a brand-new flash unit, was stolen while in Atlantic City on a Junior Achievement conference. This had the side-effect of curtailing my photographic journey for a while as I did not have the funds for a new one. I ended up buying a series of point-and-shoots during my twenties and thirties. Sadly, I also never got back into a darkroom again. During my teens I was using either my school's darkroom or my brothers at the college he taught at.

Photography during those years was mostly just snapshots, using a plethora of different point-and-shoots, of my son, my friends, parties and vacations, etc. I had lost the creative drive that was building during my teens. In the 90's however, I managed to get another SLR camera, a Minolta, and my interest started to pick up again. While I primarily used the Minolta when I went on business trips and vacations, I never got the hang of using it as it should have been. I would take rolls of images only to toss them in a draw undeveloped due to cost. I remember that I cleaned out the junk draw one day and found around 35 rolls of undeveloped film of all sorts. From 35mm, Instamatic, and APS formats. Remember APS (Kodak Advantix)? Was supposed to be the next great thing...turned out to be total garbage and ungodly expensive.

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Focus on Sean Sullivan

(Continued from page 10)

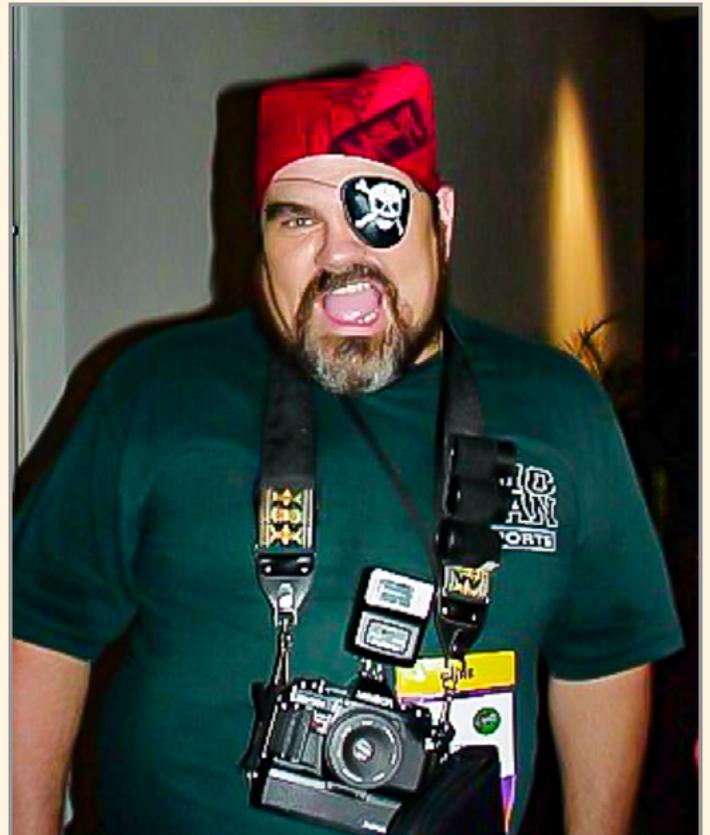
Then came the digital age and with it a total rebirth of my passion for photography. No longer did you have to waste film, time and money only to find sub-par images that only encourage one to give up. In 2007 I decided to bite the bullet and buy one of those new-fangled DSLR cameras. I've had digital ones before, but they were the low to medium resolution point-and-shoots. But I had no idea which one I should get so I did some Internet research and was actually leaning toward Canon. My ex-wife's youngest was working at Ritz in Boscov's at the time, so I consulted with him and what I should buy as an entry level DSLR. I eventually settled on a Nikon D70 with the 18-55mm kit lens. (Sometimes I wish I had gone Canon, but that's another story for another time) and I was I was hooked. I started to come down with (and may still have) the world's worst case of GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome) you can imagine. I invested in more lenses, off-camera flashes, tripods, any photography gimmicky doodad they put out. I bought books, DVD, and took on-line and classroom courses. I started to attend multi-day workshops with the likes of Moose Peterson and Joe McNally. And this was all before the end of 2008. I was taking pictures like a madman (actually, my first photography website was "A Madman with a Camera").



Self Portrait Circa 2010

According to Lightroom I took over 12,000 images during 2007-2008. That does not probably include the thousands I lost to a disk crash in 2008.

It wasn't long before I was upgrading my camera every year it seemed, along with lenses of all sorts and sizes. I spent a lot of time the first couple of years going to the local bars in Cohoes and photographing the bands, did a couple of weddings (something I have come to hate) and anything else I could think of. I was never without my camera bag.



Madman



2nd Place Moose Peterson Workshop, 2008

Photography had become like crack to me, I just could not get enough. Thanks to SPS I have made lots of friends, learned tons about photography and post-processing, gone on some amazing trips and am just continually learning.

Continued...

Focus on Sean Sullivan

(Continued from page 11)

Ansel Adams once said, "There are no rules for good photographs, there are only good photographs."

And I try to remember that every time I take a photograph. A lot of my best work has been images that did not always "follow the rules". While many judges may disagree with that assessment, I have not let it deter me (what do judges know anyway?). For me, a good photograph is one that makes me smile and giddy to show it off. It may not always be an award-winning image, but then again, photography is an art, and the rules are not set-in stone. If we all followed the rules nothing new would be discovered.

Recently I've expanded my horizons in photography to videography and drones. While this aspect of photography is fresh to me, I've found that I'm very excited to learn as much as I can. I even went and got my FAA Part 107 Remote Pilots Certificate recently just for this purpose. I hope to share more of my imagery with everyone in the coming months and look forward to seeing what exciting new images everyone else has been making.

Till then, keep on shooting!

Sean



Blue Light, 2016



Lock 7 From Above

Continued...

Focus on Sean Sullivan

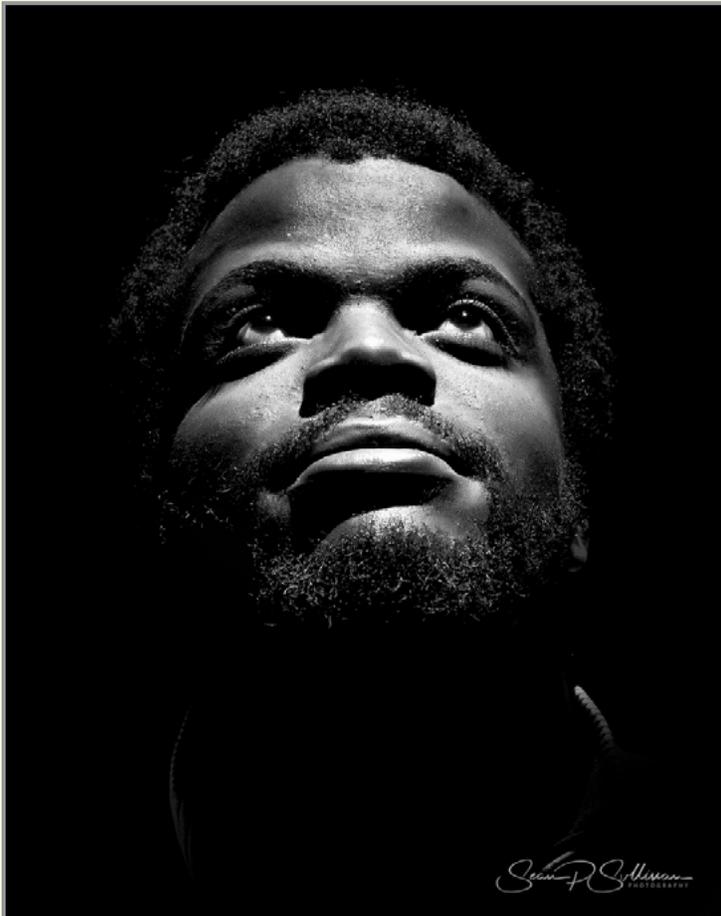
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Hornblower, 2014



Santa



Jeremy, 2012



Hero. 2009

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Focus on Sean Sullivan

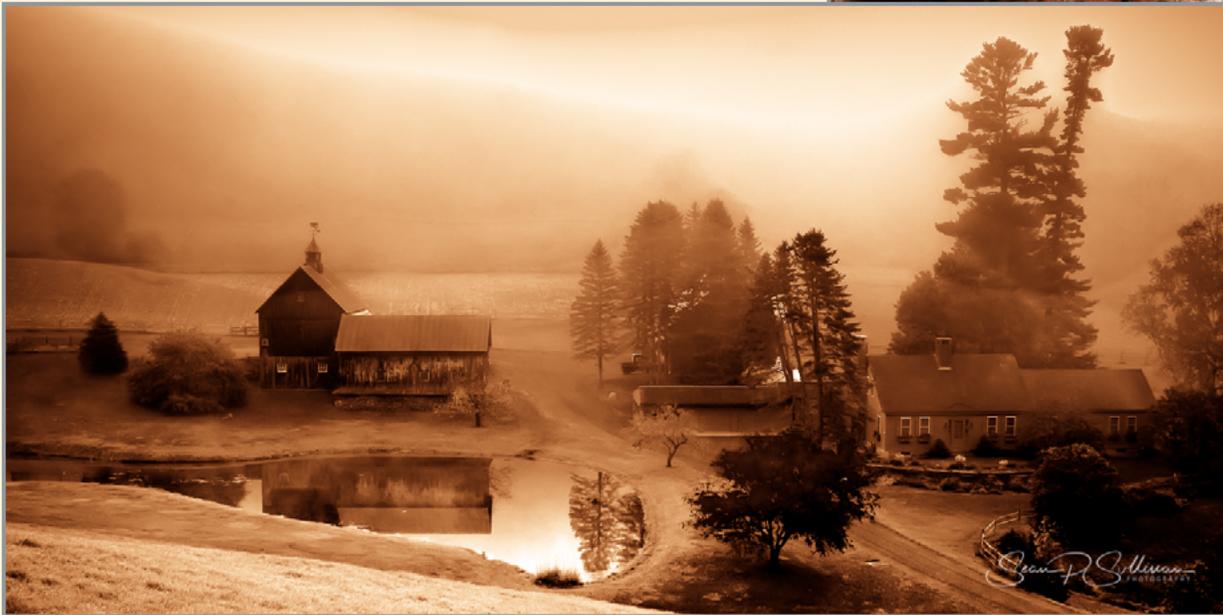
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Family, 2019



Capone Cell



Misty Morning MPW, 2008

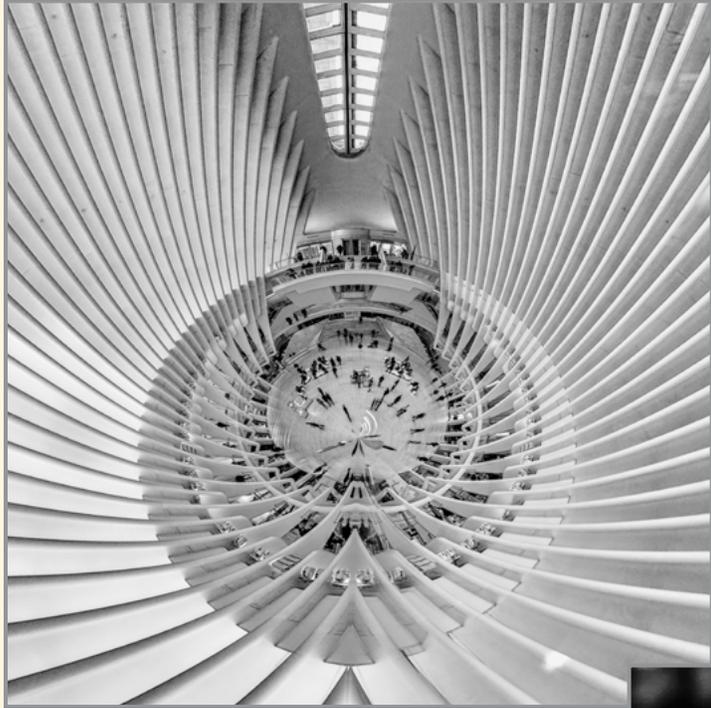


Shattered Time, 2017

Continued...

Focus on Sean Sullivan

(Continued from page 14)



Oculus Tiny Planet



Orange Flight, 2020

Follow Sean's photographic
journey on his website:
www.spsphotography.com



WWPW, 2011

WHAT REMAINS... THE BEAUTY OF WINTER IN THE GARDEN by Anne Belmont

(Reprinted with permission from Anne Belmont and The Nature Photographers Network.)

Access the original article here:

<https://community.naturephotographers.network/t/what-remains-the-beauty-of-winter-in-the-garden/19101>



"Culver's Root" - © Anne Belmont

As a nature photographer specializing in flower and botanical photography, the winter can be a challenging time to find subjects. As the flowers die and winter extends its icy hold on us, I normally seek the warmth of the indoors to photograph in conservatories and greenhouses in the Chicago area where I live. These lush indoor settings are filled with interesting subjects – ferns, desert plants, tropical flowers and seasonal flower shows. This is not a normal year, however, and all those indoor spaces are closed due to the pandemic. Many of us have had to dig a little deeper and use our creativity to keep photographing during this challenging year, and particularly during the cold months of winter. I knew that if I was going to continue to photograph during the winter, I had to rearrange my thinking, learn to embrace winter and begin to see my subjects a little differently. I was totally unprepared for the transformation to

come – that I would grow to see this season in a completely new way.



"Holding - The Sweet Embrace" - © Anne Belmont

Continued...

What Remains...

(Continued from page 16)

Until now, I have been someone who disliked winter. I don't like to be cold and I had little desire to be outdoors photographing in the frigid winter of the Chicago area. Let's face it, to me there was nothing fun about facing the sub-zero temperatures and the stinging wind of winter in the Midwest. I viewed winter as the unfortunate but necessary bridge from the last flowers of October to the emergence of spring in April. I always waited it out and sought my indoor spaces to continue photographing. This year I was determined to change that attitude.

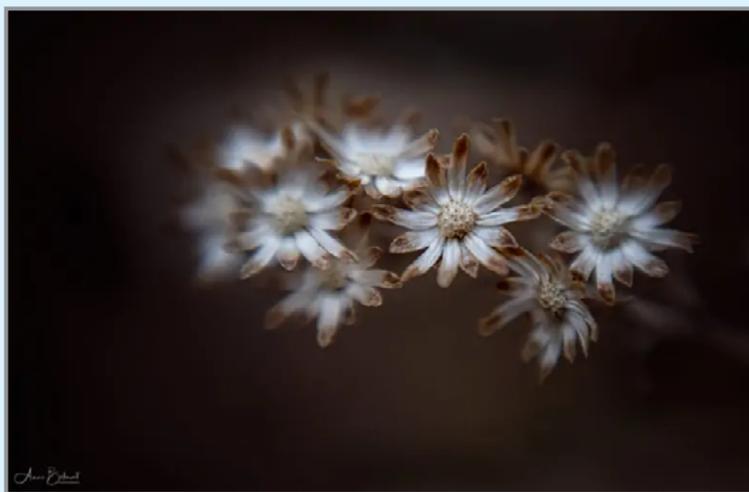
After a little research on how to layer more effectively to stay warm during my outings, I decided to dedicate myself to daily walks with my camera at Chicago Botanic Garden, a place only a few miles from my home where I do most of my flower and botanical photography during the growing season. I also found a woodland area a short walk from my home that was full of interesting subjects. I wasn't convinced I would persevere, but I was willing to give it a good hardy try. I learned quickly that limiting my gear to one or two lenses made my walks more enjoyable and pushed me to use what I had more creatively. It also eliminated a lot of lens changing in frigid temperatures.



"Hydrangea in Winter" - © Anne Belmont



"Leaf Dancer" - © Anne Belmont



"Flowers of Winter" - © Anne Belmont

Most of my work is photographed with Lensbaby lenses and I find that the artistic effects and blur of these manual focus lenses helps me to see and capture my subjects in the way they feel to me. A variety of Lensbaby lenses comprise my work during this winter project – the Velvet 56mm, Velvet 85mm, Sol 45mm and the Spark 2.0. These lenses are perfect for photographing using selective focus, employing a shallow depth of field to lead the eye to interesting details and letting the surrounding area go to a beautiful blur.

Continued...

What Remains...

(Continued from page 17)

Rather than looking for the vibrant colors and freshly opened flowers of a spring, summer or fall garden, I was on a mission to discover the more subdued hues of winter, the grace and unique beauty of dying flowers, curling leaves, seed pods, and other interesting remains of the garden. Almost immediately, I was stunned at the beauty I was finding and the way it deeply resonated with me. I began to change my way of thinking about winter and embraced the unique beauty of the garden and woodlands in winter.

Many of the garden areas at Chicago Botanic Garden are left intact during the winter – woodland gardens, the prairie areas, native plant gardens and others – so my subjects have been rich and varied. This focus on capturing the beauty of what remains in the garden in winter unexpectedly became exhilarating, and I couldn't wait to get out the door each day for these peaceful, reflective winter walks. I have stayed warm and comfortable. I finally learned to invite the winter in and embrace it.

During this time I have been increasingly reflective about the concept of wintering, how we can use this time of winter to rest and also to gain new insights and wisdom. I became captivated by a book I stumbled upon – *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times* by Katherine May. Just as plants and animals winter and rest, we as humans have a need to slow down, to reflect and to “hibernate.” After the stresses and challenges of this very different and difficult year, I found myself in mid-December feeling exhausted and depleted and needing to rest and refuel. Normally I would plow through that feeling and keep moving, but this year I listened and took my cue from the plants I was increasingly fascinated in capturing. It was time to rest, to reflect, to slow down and



“Standing up to Adversity” - © Anne Belmont



“The Twirl” and “The Remains of the Hairy Toad Lily” - © Anne Belmont

give myself the chance to be new again. I allowed myself to sleep more, to dig into books again, to cook hearty meals, to nest, to write, and to enjoy my personal photography. I put aside my “to-do” list for the time and increasingly learned how to say “no, not now.”

Continued...

What Remains...

(Continued from page 18)

No matter the season, I am drawn to capturing the details of nature, the interesting details that are often missed by those walking quickly through a garden or in nature. I look for the unique personality and characteristics reflected in the flowers and subjects I photograph, and I often see stories and emotions in the images I capture, a result of my background as an art therapist. Photographing is my therapy, it is my way of further understanding myself and the feelings that emerge through my subjects.

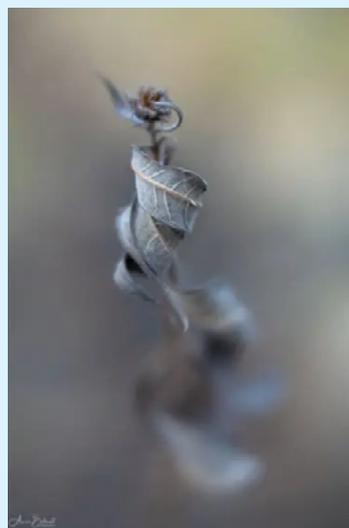
Employing a slow and mindful approach in the garden, I spend time exploring my subject in-depth and allowing those stories and emotions to emerge. Winter subjects I found to be no different. In fact, I found those stories and emotions emerging in a powerful, raw way. It was as if these subjects were just waiting to be known and appreciated for their unique beauty. I found myself drawn to the graceful curves of a leaf as it dries and curls, the grace of a flower as it does its last dance, and the fascinating transformation of flowers and plants that take on very different appearances in winter. We are a culture that values youth and vitality, but we must also embrace the beauty and wisdom of age. Photographing in winter helps me to see that more clearly. There is such incredible beauty and grace in the garden in winter.



"Dancing in the Wind" and "Graceful Curves of Amsonia" - © Anne Belmont



"Japanese Maple Leaf" and "Standing Tall" - © Anne Belmont



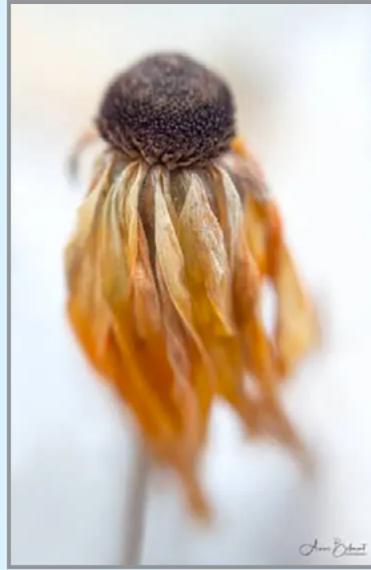
"The Last Dance" and "Pirouette" - © Anne Belmont

Winter can be a time of clarity and renewal. I have found that the crispness of the air makes the senses more alert and creative thinking flows. There is a quietness, as if nature is resting. The gardens are far quieter and draw fewer visitors than the other seasons, which adds to the sense of peace. Even in winter, however, the cycle of life and hints of renewal are present.

Continued...

What Remains...

(Continued from page 19)



“Color in the Winter Snow” and “Rudbeckia in Snow”- © Anne Belmont

In the fall, as days grow shorter and the temperatures fall, the chlorophyll of the leaves breaks down and fall colors begin to emerge. The cells holding the leaf to the branch begin to break down and weaken, and most leaves eventually dry and fall off. If you observe trees carefully in fall and winter, you will see that even as they drop their leaves, the buds of next year’s leaves are already in place, quietly waiting to emerge in spring. This is part of the cycle of growth, maturity and renewal. Wintering can allow us all to rest, reflect and re-emerge with a sense of renewal, too.



“Japanese Maple with Buds of Spring” © Anne Belmont



I look to spring with anticipation and joy, knowing that new growth and color will return to the earth as the snowdrops and crocuses poke their sleepy heads out of the ground. Yet, I will never see winter quite the same again. I will no longer push it away as something to be ignored or complained about, but I will embrace it as a time of rest and renewal, a time to see the earth in a different but equally beautiful part of the growth cycle. Will I feel the need to winter and rest in future years? This year, no doubt, has been like no other for so many of us – a year filled with anxiety, fear, loss and uncertainty. Perhaps the need to pull back will not be as strong as this year, but if the need is there, I know to listen and embrace it. From this year forward I do know that my exploration of the beauty of winter will continue.



“Snowdrops, the First Sign of Spring”- © Anne Belmont

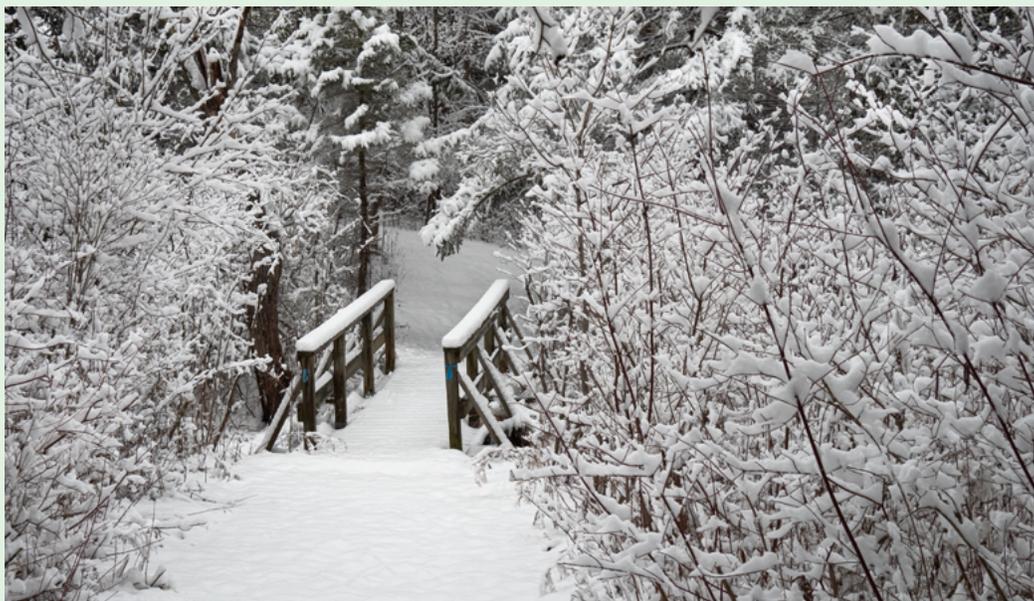
Anne Belmont is a nature photographer from the Chicago area specializing in flower photography. Anne’s passion lies in capturing the beauty of flowers and other botanical subjects up-close. A life-long involvement in the arts and a career as an art therapist have shaped the way she views art and the creative process, and have reinforced her belief in the healing power of both art and nature in our lives. Anne’s goal as an educator is to help others see more deeply, unleash their creativity and bring their heart into their work. As a Lensbaby Ambassador, Anne is passionate about using Lensbaby lenses to promote creativity and bring emotion into her photography.

<https://www.annebelmontphotography.com/>

YOUR PANDEMIC HOBBY MIGHT BE DOING MORE GOOD THAN YOU KNOW

by Michael Merschel, American Heart Association News

(Reprinted with permission: **The American Heart Association News**)



“Winter Wonderland” - © Linda Tommasulo

**February is
American
Heart
Month!**

Maybe it was the meme that pointed out how Shakespeare used his time

in quarantine to write “King Lear.” Maybe it was all those photos of sourdough bread in your social media feed. Maybe you’re just bored.

Whatever the spark – you’re ready to take on a hobby.

Good idea, experts say.

“The process of being creative does a whole bunch of really good things for us,” physically and mentally, said James C. Kaufman, professor of educational psychology at the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut in Storrs.

Kaufman, who has written extensively about creativity, said there are many reasons why a stimulating hobby can help us. The first is pretty simple: It’s fun.

That’s mentally healthy, Kaufman said, because when we’re focused on such an activity, “we’re not thinking about any negative thoughts or fears or worries.”

At its best, a creative activity such as drawing or playing music can put you in a state of “flow,”

where you’re intensely caught up in what you’re doing. “This is not shock-

ingly different from what they call runner’s high, or what mountain climbers say they feel.”

Some activities, such as writing with an emphasis on a narrative, as in a journal or blog, can lower harmful stress by helping us organize our thinking, he said. “It helps put all these different thoughts, as if they were loose clothing, onto coat hangers. And it frees up space in our brain.”

That’s not the only way hobbies can help us, researchers say. A 2015 study in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* found that engaging in leisure activities improved mood and stress levels and lowered heart rates. In 2017, a small study in *Psychosomatic Medicine* found that pleasant leisure activities lowered the blood pressure of Alzheimer’s disease caregivers.

And that’s important in the middle of a pandemic, said Jeanine Parisi, an associate scientist in the department of mental health at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore. “Everything seems a little out of control. Activities are the one thing that could provide structure and give you back a sense of personal control.”

Continued...

Your Pandemic Hobby

(Continued from page 21)

Parisi's colleague Michelle Carlson, a professor who leads a Johns Hopkins lab devoted to brain health, said the precise mechanism of what's going on in our brains when we're happily engaged in an activity isn't clear. But some of the effects are.

She led a small study published in 2015 in *Alzheimer's & Dementia* of older adults who volunteered to mentor young students in Baltimore. Compared to the adults not enrolled in the program, the participants saw growth in both the prefrontal cortex—the part of the brain related to executive function, behavior and thinking—and to the hippocampus, which is important to memory.

Others' research has found benefits from all kinds of pandemic-safe activities: gardening, spending time outdoors, playing a musical instrument, even knitting. And of course, anything that increases physical activity is crucial for heart health and also can help with brain health, Carlson said.

Overwhelmed by the options? Carlson and Parisi have done research indicating that mixing things up might actually be a great idea. Women in their study who participated in a greater variety of activities over nearly a decade had a lower risk of impaired memory and other cognitive problems.

"By doing a variety of activities, you'll expose your brain and body to different things," Parisi said. "If you meditate, that may be good for stress reduction and relaxation. If you do some puzzles or reading or writing, that may be more cognitively stimulating. And, if you take walks, that is more physically engaging. By doing all of these, you're really tapping into the whole brain and body."

Beyond that, Kaufman said, a good hobby is something that lives in the sweet spot of being not so easy that it's not engaging, but not so challenging that you give up quickly.

And if you're doing something creative, remember the benefit doesn't come from the quality of your work, he said. Put another way – we're not

all Shakespeare, and most of us will not be producing "King Lear." To expect otherwise adds stress that can negate the benefits of the activity, Kaufman said.

So, don't be afraid to take baby steps, Parisi said. "Even with physical activity, you don't have to go from being a couch potato to running a 5K. All you need to do is take one more step than you did the previous day."

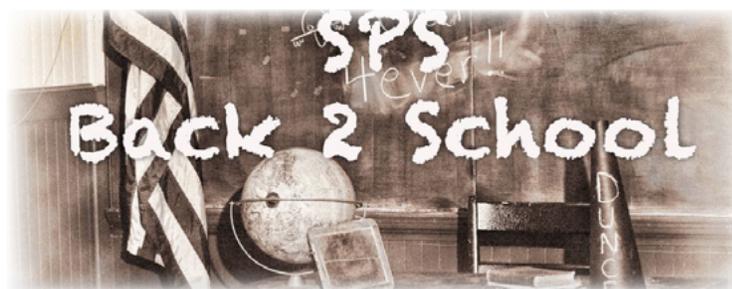
As you do the activity, "you're building confidence, you're making it part of your identity," she said. "It's giving you a sense of control and pride. That feeling of, 'Wow! I did that!'"

If you have questions or comments about this story, please email editor@heart.org.

Want to learn more about having a healthy heart: <https://www.heart.org/en>

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MY LIFE IN PHOTO ESSAYS

by Linda Tommasulo

In researching this article I discovered that I have created 16 photo essays. Why, you ask? Originally it was just a way to collect and share my favorite images. Then it was to document something important...very important. Perhaps it was an interesting and fun place that I visited, or just a "celebration of life."

I will go through them here and perhaps it will motivate you to create a photo essay (or two...or three) of your own!

2006 - "Flower Girl"

As many of you know, I really love photographing flowers. When I first discovered Fotomagico (a slideshow program designed for Mac), I had to try it on some of my favorite flower images. It was fun! Although I must admit I certainly overdid it with Ken Burns effects and too many different transitions.



2007 - "Yellowstone - Two Seasons, Two Photographers"

After my first two long-weekend photo workshops in Yellowstone (Summer and Winter) with my best friend, I put together a slide show of both of our images to share with my then Bronx photo club members. Sometimes at work I would hear the music from slide show and realize that Stanley was watching it in his office. It has very strong memories for me, not just the trip, but sharing it with someone I cherished.

2007 - "Somewhere in my Memory"

Simply a collection of some of my favorite images which I shared with my photo club.

2008 - "Stanley Benerofe - A Celebration of Life"



When my dear friend and constant photo companion passed away I arranged a celebration of his life. The highlight of the evening was a 30-minute slide show. The first half included a collection of Stanley's best images. The second half documented our life together from the year we met (1967) to the year he passed away (2008). Although it was difficult to put together, it was also healing. And I have to say that this is my most favorite photo essay.

2010 - "All About Annie"



Not long after Stanley passed away, I also lost my long-time companion, Muffin (my Maltese) at 17 years of age. In August of 2009 I adopted another Maltese, little Annie. Although I wrote to friends, "The day I got Annie is the first day of the rest of

Continued...

My Life in Photo Essays

(Continued from page 23)

my life,” it was not meant to be. Sadly she developed auto-immune encephalitis and died the day after Christmas of that same year. The slide show “All About Annie” uses many images that my friend took the day I got her, as well as a collection of my favorites. I watch it often. The music I used was “Thank You for Being a Friend.”

2011 - *“Here Comes the Sun”*
(aka *“Photography by Linda”*)

Of course, being a child of the 60’s, I always loved the Beatles. “Here Comes the Sun,” an uplifting song, inspired me to create another photo essay of my favorite images: animals, birds, flowers, etc. that I shared again with my photo club.

2012 - *“I Love NY”*



Created to Billy Joel’s “New York State of Mind,” this chronicles my first solo visit (with camera in hand) to upstate New York, which would soon become my new home.

2015 - *“Chanticleer Gardens”*



I had been to Chanticleer Gardens a few times. It is such an unusual and beautiful place! So I decided it would be my first photo essay for my new club, The Schenectady Photographic Society. It didn’t score...too long! But it is a wonderful memory of a very special place.

2016 - *“Michael and David’s Garden”*

Through one of the gals at SPS, a group of us were invited to Michael & David’s private garden. It was a wonderful summer day and I created this photo essay specifically for Michael and David.

2016 - *“The Art of Photo Art”*

Another SPS-inspired photo essay which I entered into competition. Photo art showed my original image and the same image after my “artistic touch.” It took First Place!

2017 - *“Albany Celebrates Spring”*



The Albany Tulip Festival is one of my favorite events! For years we talked about coming up for it, but never did. And now I live here! Of course, this photo essay celebrated everything wonderful (flowers and people) about the Tulip Festival in April of 2017. It was awarded an Honorable Mention.

2018 - *“Old Friends”*

“Old Friends” tells the story of retired thoroughbred racehorses reminiscing about their glory days at the Saratoga Race Course from their retirement home, “Old Friends at Cabin Creek.” Music: Paul Anka’s “The Times of Your Life.”



Continued...

My Life in Photo Essays

(Continued from page 24)

2018 - "Chihuly"

I was privileged to see the Chihuly exhibit at the New York Botanical Garden and created a photo essay of my images to share with SPS. A nice remembrance of some fabulous glass creations by the master.



2019 - "Before and After"

Before and After was created as part of a presentation at SPS to show how judicious cropping and editing can create impact in your images. Music: "Breakaway" by Kelly Clarkson.

2019 - "These are Few of My Favorite Dogs"



This is probably my best "story-telling" photo essay, about the volunteer work I do for The Capital District Humane Association, and the wonderful rescue dogs that we have helped find forever homes. Music: "These are a Few of My Favorite Things" and

"Thank you for Being a Friend."

2019 - "Welcome to New York"

Most of you saw last season's winning photo essay of my visit to New York City's Vessel and High Line. It was one of the few primarily "people essays" that I have ever done. (I am not comfortable photographing people!) It's a great memory of an excursion with a very good friend. I Googled "songs about New York" and came up with Taylor Swift's "Welcome to New York." A perfect fit!

So, as you can see, I enjoy creating photo essays. I mostly enjoy the memories they provide. I have always used music that I am familiar with to enhance the programs. Even the lyrics inspire me, and at times I try to match the lyrics to my images. However, now that we are on Zoom and public platforms, copyrighted music is a no-no. I will find it challenging this year, but I hope I can come up with something...if not great, at least memorable.

What's the take-away of this article?

Try it, you'll like it!

As Kelly Clarkson said,

***"Take a risk..take a chance...make a change...
and breakaway!"***

This season's digital photo essay competition takes place on Wednesday, March 17. It is digital, of course, since we are limited to our Zoom meetings.

The topic is wide open...anything you like!

The images can be old or new,
but they must be yours .

(Note: You may use a maximum of 10% of images that are not your own creation.)

Three to five minutes is the suggested length.

Check out the Competition Rules [here](#).

Our Photo Essay chairperson is Dow Smith.

If you have any questions, or need some inspiration, seek him out:

dowsmith323@gmail.com

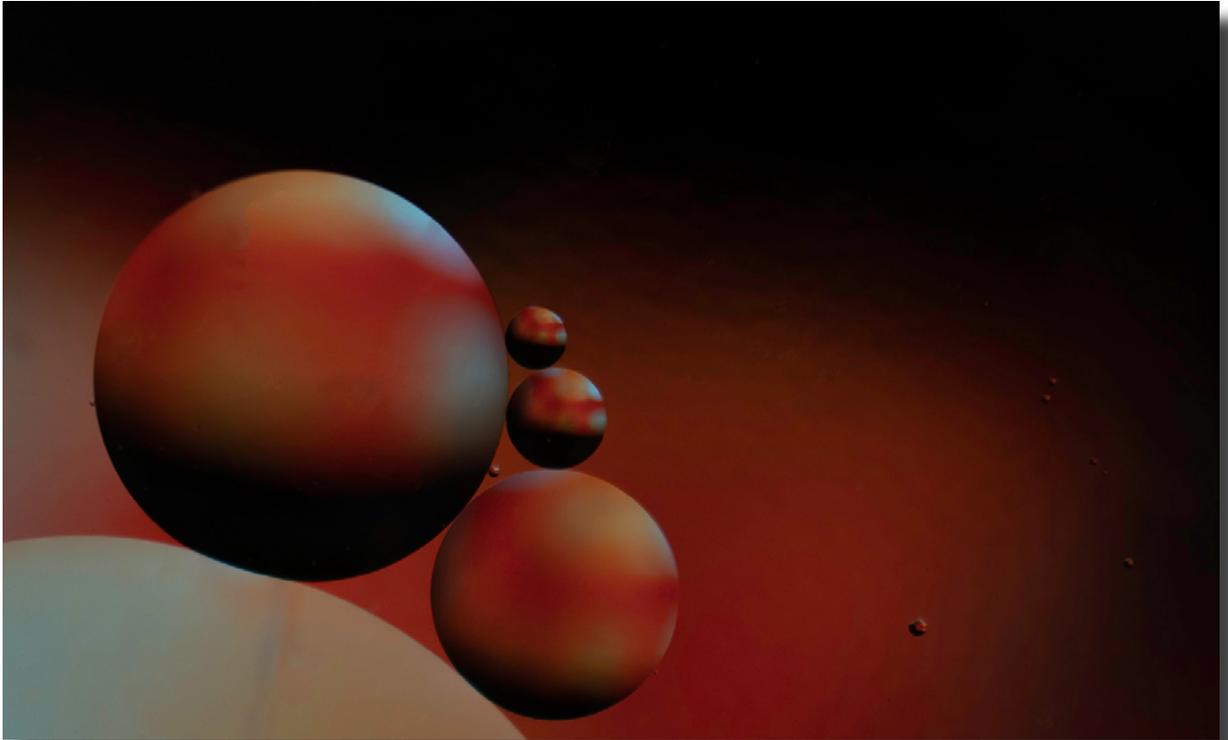
Try it, you'll like it!

JANUARY ASSIGNED TOPIC #1

Bubbles, Splashes and Drops

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First Place: "Open Space"
© Larry Hill



Second Place: "Liquid Gold"
© Joe Cotroneo

JUDGE: Joel Hoffman

Joel Hoffman has been photographing people for many purposes and in all walks of life for the past 25 years. He loves the interaction between his clients and his camera and always strives to create an environment where the person in front of the camera is comfortable and is having fun. Whether a wedding, bar or bat mitzvah, senior portrait, model portfolio, headshot or corporate event, Joel's goal is to allow his client to relax, sit back and leave the driving to him.

His mission is to capture the true essence of the person being photographed and to capture that defining moment to create great memories that will last a lifetime.

Continued...

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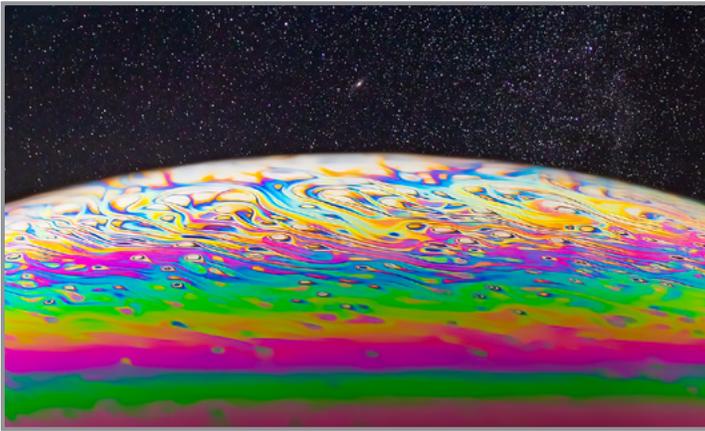
1



Third Place: "Strawberry Drop"
© Alan Wiggins



Fourth Place: "Balloon Fantasy"
© Linda Tommasulo



"Alien Planet"/ © Joe Cotroneo

Honorable Mention



"Blue Crystal Drops"
© Jeana Caywood

"Wet Leaf"
© Kim Koza



"Magic Bubbles"
© Linda Tommasulo

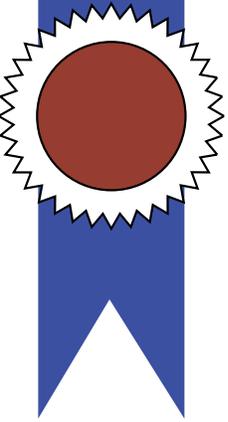
Check out these winning images and more competition photos on our website:

www.spsphoto.org

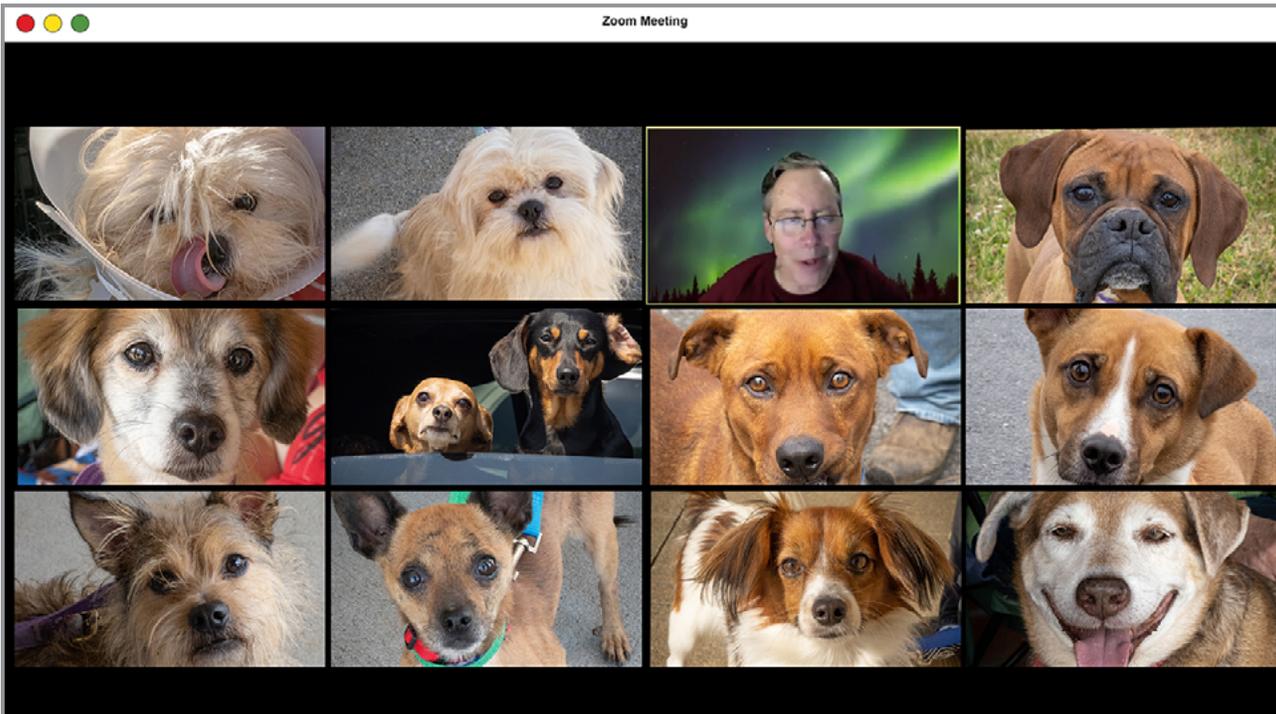
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**JANUARY ASSIGNED
TOPIC #2
We All Stayed Home**



First Place:
"Did My Mousetrap Come?"
© Elena Keesee



Second Place:
"Zooming with
Man's Best Friend"
© Linda Tommasulo

JANUARY ASSIGNED TOPIC #2

We All Stayed Home

ASSIGNED
2



Third Place: 2020 What a Year"
© Joe Cotroneo

Honorable Mention



"Game No. 526"
© Barb Lawton



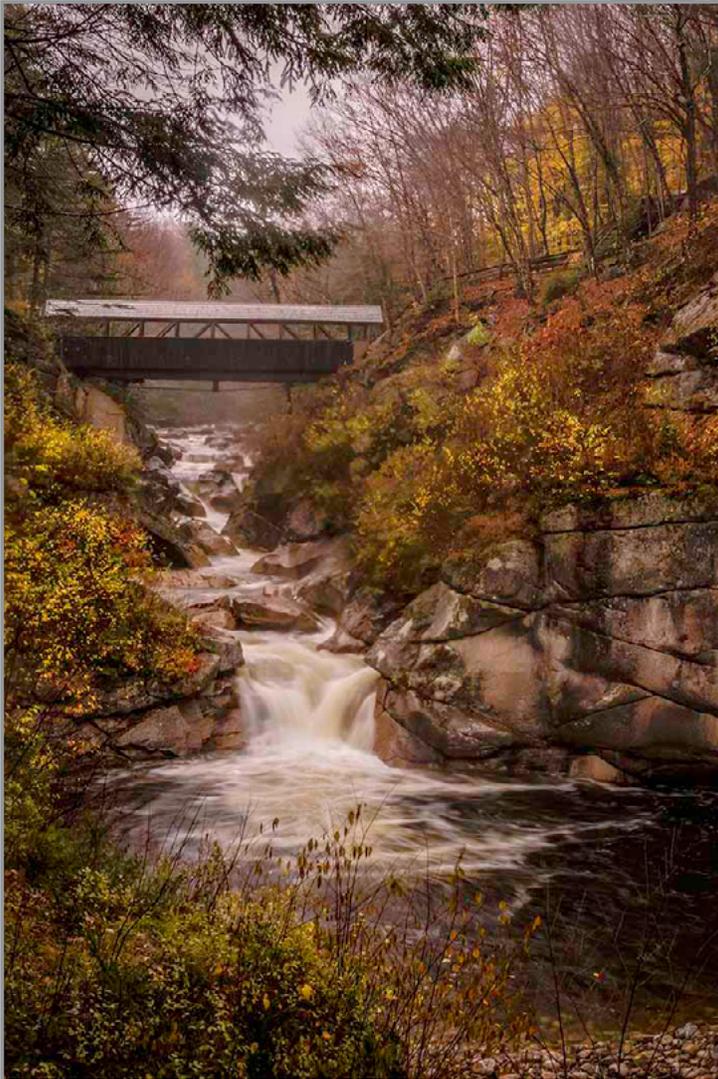
"Dave & Fire" © Kim Koza



"Prisoner"
© Joe Cotroneo

JANUARY DIGITAL IMAGE GENERAL

Second Place:
"Rainy Day Monday"
© Jeana Caywood



First Place: "Doorway" / © Kim Koza

JUDGE: Roz Kleffman

Roz Kleffman has been a photographer for many years. In 1979, Roz moved to Maryland with her husband Dave and their two children. Roz joined the Bowie-Crofton Camera Club in 1980 and has held every office in that club except treasurer. After 22 years as club president, Roz has taken a short break. She remains active with the newly-formed Maryland Photography Alliance and continues to promote photography through judging, teaching, PSA, and exhibits.

Her love of travel and scuba diving has given her many great photo opportunities. Roz sees herself as a "jack of all trades" with a slant on capturing that image where ever she may wander.

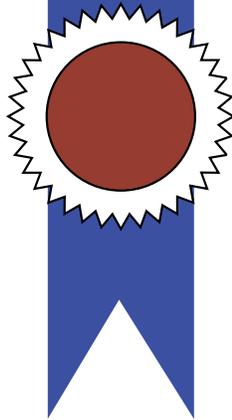
"I am also the chair of the Maryland Photo Alliance Judge Certification Program, I am an FPSA certified PSA lady too. I love to judge photography. Gives me a chance to see everyone's art."

Continued...

JANUARY
DIGITAL
IMAGE
GENERAL



Third Place:
"Slaughterhouse Red"
© Neil Shapiro



Fourth Place: "Red Hot"
© Claudia Jakubowski

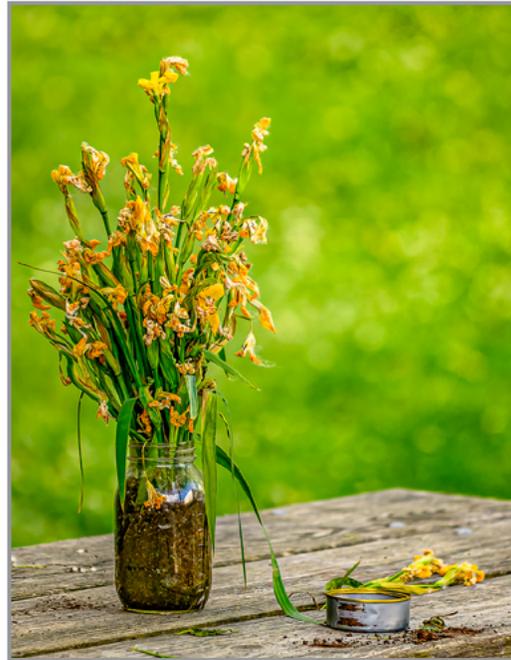


Fifth Place: "Flying Springs"
© Joe Cotroneo

JANUARY DIGITAL IMAGE - GENERAL



“Rolling Hills”
© Bill Lanahan



“Fading Fast”
© Sean Sullivan



“At the County Fair”
© Larry Hill



“Rainy Day at St. Andrews, Scotland”
© Phil Olivo

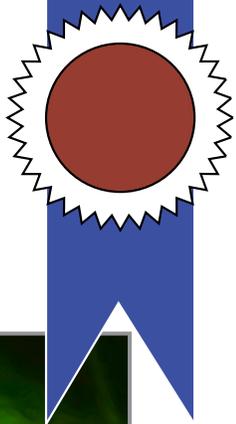


“Locust Tree”
© Linda Tommasulo

Check out these winning images and more competition photos on our website:

www.spsphoto.org

GENERAL





JANUARY
DIGITAL IMAGE
MONOCHROME



First Place:
"Windowless"
© Sean Sullivan



Second Place:
"Podium Patterns"
© Elena Keesee

JANUARY
DIGITAL IMAGE
MONOCHROME

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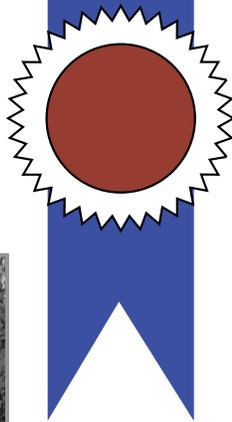
Third Place: "Surrounded"
© Claudia Jakubowski



Fourth Place: "Facade"
© Linda Tommasulo



Fifth Place: "Not Complaining About This View"
© Jeana Caywood



JANUARY DIGITAL IMAGE MONOCHROME

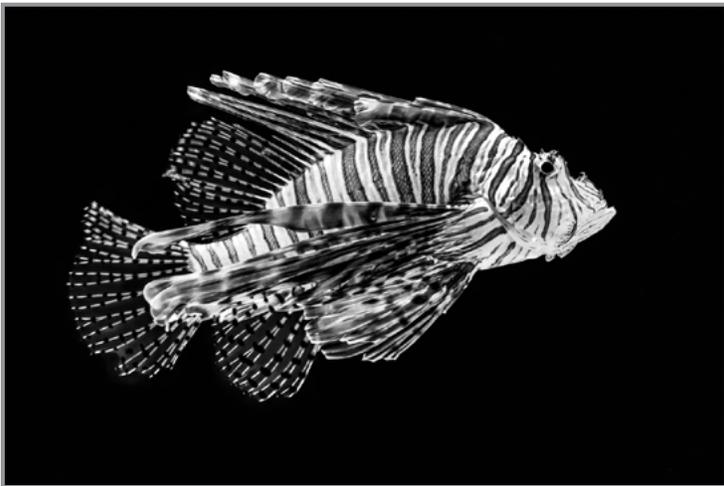
Honorable Mention



"Movie Set Vibes" / © Claudia Jakubowski



"Nature's Pyramids"
© Neil Shapiro



"Zebra Fish" / © Joe Cotroneo

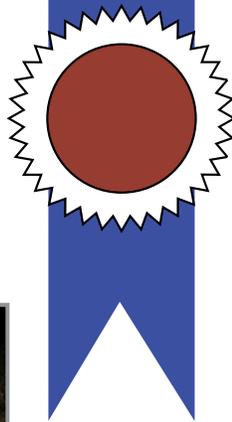


"Rose in Black & White"
© Sean Sullivan



"Peony"
© Kim Koza

MONOCHROME



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Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, & Friday.

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(asamiljan@huntsphoto.com),
and he'll get right back to you.



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40-150mm f/2.8 PRO \$1,299.

45mm f/1.2 PRO \$1,099.

300mm f/4 PRO \$2,699.

I'm still accepting pre-orders for the new **Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 150-400mm f/4.5 TC1.25X IS PRO** lens, \$7,499. Delivery should begin this month!

HUNT'S FEBRUARY SPECIALS

Here are my specials for February. These specials will run from February 1-26, 2021. If there is anything you're interested in that you don't see here, please contact me for a quote! If there is anything you've heard or read about that may be coming in the future, call me and I will enter you in my "notify when announced" list.

On January 26, **Sony** announced their flagship **Alpha a1**. It's a 50 megapixel wonder that will shoot at 30 fps! It's advanced AF Eye Tracking will be a boon to anyone who shoots moving subjects, especially bird photographers. This is the most powerful 50MP full-frame camera I've ever seen.

And don't forget that Hunt's offers a large selection of online classes and events! Click [here](#) for details.

In order to take advantage of these specials, or if you'd like a quote on anything else, please call me, **Alan Samiljan, at 781-462-2383** to place your order and reference this email. As always, UPS Ground shipping is FREE in the Lower 48. My regular hours are 8:30-5:00pm eastern, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday.

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- Bruce Byers - a professional photographer. A guide with a wealth of photographic knowledge, stories and humor – all at your daily disposal.
- My overall experience as member of the travel/photography workshop was above par. Having a guide with Bruce's skills and background makes for an excellent experience and adventure!

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ABOUT THE SCHENECTADY PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



For more than 89 years, the Schenectady Photographic Society has been the meeting place of photographers of all levels—from beginners to serious amateurs to professionals—with the goal of exploring and sharing their love of photography. Members throughout the Capital Region meet primarily on Wednesday nights to engage in various competitions (print, projected, photo essay and more), enjoy member round-table discussions, guest speaker presentations and hands-on mentoring to further their knowledge, creativity and inspiration. Occasional field trips* give us the opportunity to expand our photographic vision; and frequent exhibits* in the local area allow us to share that vision.

In addition to our monthly print* and projected competitions, we are challenged with an assigned topic—encouraging participants to venture out of their comfort zones. Members participating in competitions receive specific commentary and suggestions to take their images to the next level. Don't wish to compete? That's OK too. Observing competitions is always an inspirational and learning experience.

The Schenectady Photographic Society is an enthusiastic and energetic group. Our camaraderie is infectious. Check out our calendar on the last page (season runs from late September to mid-May) and join us! Visitors are always welcomed...especially those who have a passion for photography.

*It's not about being better than everyone else...
it's about being better than you were.*

*Postponed for the 2020-2021 season due to Covid-19.

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Facebook Group: **https://www.facebook.com/groups/schenectadyphotographicsociety/**

Facebook Page: **https://www.facebook.com/schenectadyphotographicsociety/**

Instagram: @schenectadyphotographic

THE FOCUS NEEDS YOU! For articles, suggestions, and member profiles (bios/photos).

Contact Linda at **newsletter@spsphoto.org**.

SCHENECTADY PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY VIRTUAL 2020-2021 SEASON CALENDAR

Meetings start at 7pm via Zoom. Members will receive appropriate link to sign in.
This schedule is always work in progress and is subject to change!

Note: All competitions are DIGITAL. For Assigned topics, with the exception of October, images must have been taken on or after May 1, 2020. October Assigned Topics must have been taken on or after May 1, 2019.

Images which previously placed (in print or digital) may NOT be resubmitted.

Members may enter a total of four (4) images, no more than two (2) in any one category.

Deadline for submission of digital images is midnight on Saturday before the competition date—no exceptions!

September, 2020

9/16/20.....2019-2020

Digital Image of the Year Competition

9/23/20.....2019-2020

Digital Photo Essay Competition

October, 2020

10/14/20..... *General/Mono Digital Competition*

10/21/20.....*Event Night*

Dow Smith, "Photo Essay Inspiration"
and Jeana Caywood, "Photo Stacking"

10/26/20..... *Assigned Digital Competition*

Topic #1: Fairs and Festivals

Topic #2: Show Us Your Curves

10/28/20..... *Virtual 2019-2020 Banquet*

November, 2020

11/4/20..... *Assigned Digital Competition*

Topic #1: Turn the Ordinary into Art

Topic #2: What's That Outside my Window?

11/11/20..... *General/Mono Digital Competition*

11/18/20.....*Event Night*

Cole Thompson, "Why Black & White Photography"

December, 2020

12/2/20..... *Assigned Digital Competition*

Topic #1: Hands

Topic #2: It's Just Tee Pee

12/9/20.....*Event Night*

"Mirrorless Cameras" presented by Hunt's Photo
plus vendors TBA

12/16/20..... *General/Mono Digital Competition*

January, 2021

1/6/21..... *Assigned Digital Competition*

Topic #1: Bubbles, Splashes and Drops

Topic #2: We All Stayed at Home

1/13/21..... *General/Mono Digital Competition*

1/20/21.....*Event Night*

Mark Bowie: "Envision: The Art of Seeing Creatively"

1/27/21..... *Special Event Night*

Lewis Katz: "From Capture to Print: The Art of Black &
White Photography"

February, 2021

2/3/21..... *Assigned Digital Competition*

Topic #1: Things Broken

Topic #2: Juxtaposition

2/10/21..... *General/Mono Digital Competition*

2/17/21.....*Event Night*

Sarah Marino: "Expanding Your Vision to Include
Nature's Smaller Scenes"

2/24/21..... *Special Event Night*

Nic Stover: "The Psychology of Photography"

March, 2021

3/3/21..... *Assigned Digital Competition*

Topic #1: Back to Basics

Topic #2: It's not Always What it Seems

3/10/21..... *General/Mono Digital Competition*

3/17/21..... *Photo Essay Competition*

Hosted by Dow Smith

3/24/21..... *Open*

3/31/21..... *Special Event Night*

David DesRochers: "Artist Earth"

April, 2021

4/7/21..... *Assigned Digital Competition*

Topic #1: Time of Year

Topic #2: Food Deep Dive

4/14/21..... *General/Mono Digital Competition*

4/21/21.....*Event Night*

Joe Cotroneo: "Macro Photography"

4/28/21..... *Special Event Night*

Essdras Suarez, "Mastering Street Photography"

May, 2021

5/5/21..... *Assigned Digital Image of the Year*

5/12/21..... *General/Monochrome
Digital Image of the Year*

5/19/21..... *Special Event Night*

Ian Plant: "Making Stunning Nature Photos"

5/26/21..... *Special Event Night*

To Be Announced

6/2 or 6/9/21..... *Special Event Night*

Mollie Isaacs: "Get Your Creative Groove On"

June 2021..... *Awards Banquet ???*