

# In Camera

*The Newsletter of the Hawkesbury Camera Club Inc.*

## FROM THE CHAIR

### Welcome to November!

As you know October saw the AGM take place. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the 2011 Committee for all of their hard work and efforts throughout this year. Being on the Committee is often a thankless task and a lot of things happen in the background that go towards making the club meetings and events happen. If you are interested in knowing more about this, please feel free to speak to any of the current committee members so that in October 2012 you too can put your hand up for a position on the committee.

In the mean time I would like to welcome and thank all of those who put their hand up for the Committee for 2012. These roles take effect from January 2012 except for mine, as unfortunately Dale was not able to continue as President for the remainder of the year. I believe that with some new faces on the Committee and a burst of enthusiasm and energy, 2012 should be a fantastic year with great outings and competitions planned to get you active and your creative juices flowing.

I know that a lot of members have been down in the doldrums throughout this year and it has been a hard year both for the club and for me personally. I would like to turn this around in 2012 and beyond so if you have any questions, thoughts, suggestions, gripes or just want to chat, please drop me a line as I want to open up communication around the club and make the Committee's work/role more interactive and open to all members.

On the 20 October we hosted the Hawkesbury City Council Garden Competition night and I would like to say a big thanks to John Hughes for organising this event with Charles and Allan looking after the images. All in all the night went well with over 140 attending, and I would like to thank those few members who attended on

the night to both assist and be present on the night.



### OFFICE BEARERS

<b>President:</b>	Kim Nemetz 4579 6899
<b>Vice President:</b>	Marian Paap 0402 116 670
<b>Secretary:</b>	Charles Sutton 4577 2284
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Ian Cambourne 4577 5148
<b>Comp Manager:</b>	Kim Duproy & Alan Sadleir
<b>Publicity:</b>	David Duproy
<b>Activities Coordinator:</b>	Denise Newton
<b>Newsletter Editor:</b>	Alan Aldrich 9627 4225

### COMING UP

<b>November 2</b>	Photos For Kids
<b>November 9</b>	Digital Group
<b>October 16</b>	End of Year Competition to be held at Richmond Public School
<b>December 2</b>	Christmas Dinner at the Richmond Club. Booking essential.

Now for a few reminders: our next meeting on 2 November is to select photographs for the Children's Ward at Hawkesbury Hospital, so please bring a maximum of 3 photos with a minimum size of 8x10 to enter and also the soft copies in case your print is selected by our panel of expert judges in this field.

The end of year competition will be at the Richmond Primary School – just down from the club. Entry to the hall is from Francis Street. Denise is organising tea & coffee but it would be appreciated if you could bring a small plate (of food) on the night. Now don't forget we will still need a hand to set up and pack up so please be early to assist with this. While on this subject Alan Sadler does a fantastic job often setting up hours before our function so that everyone can arrive and just hang their prints. Given this it would be so greatly appreciated if everyone could help pack up so that this task is not left to the usual few and Alan. If we share this load it becomes so much easier.

Finally our Christmas Dinner is on Friday 2 December at the Richmond Club, cost is \$40 per person and include a fun trivia quiz on the night. Please bring your \$\$ on Wednesday 2 November for Ian and book your seats for a great night with friends for the end of year celebrations.

Yours in shutterbug

Kim

### THANKS DALE

The Camera Club must extend a vote of thanks to Dale Irwin who took over the Vice Presidency and then the Presidency I what can only be described as unusual circumstances. He did an excellent job as he tried to maintain the club's morale when so easily it could have fallen apart.

## COMPETITION NIGHTS

Increasingly members have been voicing their disapproval of the way Judges talk about or involve members in discussions about the various aspects of the photographs they are commenting on.

Our last couple of judges have exemplified the point. Rod Murphy maintained an interrupted dialogue on his interpretation of the images displayed. Some of his opinions were disparaging to the photographer.

Our last Judge Mike Smyth tried to involve the audience by asking what the photographer had in mind when taking the photograph. He argued that the subject and subject matter may or may not be conducive to each other.

To this end he was asked to expand on this philosophy and to suggest where Camera Clubs can fore fill the needs of it's members by asking him the question "Where to next for Camera Club's". Mike's opinion is valued as he has been a member and office bearer for Lane Cove Camera Club including president for 20 years. He has seen many enthusiastic members join various clubs then become disillusioned and leave.

His reply was as follows.

Hi Alan,

Thanks for your Email, the question of "where to next" for club competitions has been exercising our minds for about a year now. I guess the first question we need to ask ourselves is "What is the purpose of a camera club?"

My answers to that would be:

*To learn from others and to assist new photographers to learn photographic skills,*

*To share our knowledge, information and experiences with like-minded people and to improve our skills and effectiveness as visual artists.*

The way we do these things is by having social get togethers, workshops, lectures and "evaluation" sessions where we can submit our images for constructive evaluation and discussion.

The traditional camera club competition format fails on several fronts, especially with the lack of any meaningful discussion between the evaluator, photographer and other members. The result is formulaic images and no progress in our skills. We all know people who produce the same sort of images year in and year

out. The intent of the two way discussions during competition nights (as we did last week) is to try to get some feedback from the photographer to see if I (or "we") understand what they are trying to tell us. It also allows others to make suggestions and as often happens, pick up something that the judge has missed. To my mind that is much better than a one sided monologue.

In my ideal world we would not have point scores or even awards, although if pressed, I would be happy to nominate one or more images on the night that I felt were the most "effective" Also I would not have categories - all images should be presented as a collection of work. I would get rid of mini prints as they are too small for the audience to see and with the low cost of printing today, the idea of a cost saving format has lost its meaning. You would also know that I favour a print as 100 times preferable to a digital projected image, as I firmly believe that a large part of the "Craft" of photography is in producing a beautifully printed and mounted print. Digital image projection has too many shortcomings to be considered as a "final" version of an image. Fine for "work in progress" for evaluation nights, but I see it as an interim stage only, never the "Final" piece of work.

By eliminating the competition aspect of these nights we can also eliminate "A" and "B" grades. As images are being evaluated on their own, there is no longer any sense of "competition", so newer members need not feel at a disadvantage.

To make the nights more useful and bearing in mind that a two way discussion takes longer than a monologue, I would restrict the number of entries per person to one or two per night. Ansell Adams produced on average 6 good images a year during his working life. I doubt that many of us can really produce as many, so 10 or 20 images per year seems like overkill. Keep the numbers down and the quality up.

To make matters simple for the "Competition" nights - I would really rather call them "Evaluations"

I would summarise the ideas that Des has put forward for image evaluation into these simple points:

1. What is the idea, message or statement the photographer is trying to make with the image? (In Des' language, the "Ideation")? Or, "The subject"

2. Has the photographer used their imagination and creativity to tell us something in a new way or in a way that captures our interest? ("Creativity" and "Aesthetics")

3. Is the image presented in an appropriate way - does the image demonstrate appropriate photographic qualities? (Sharpness, tonality, colour, presentation etc)

4. Does the image effectively communicate the core idea, message or statement? Does it evoke a response from us? (Attraction, revulsion, empathy etc)

5. Is there anything the photographer could do to make it more effective? Are there any glaring defects or faults in the presentation? (Colour cast, over sharpening, inappropriate mounting etc) ? this is the feedback that most people want.

At the end of the year, you could still have an "Image of the year" exhibition and evaluation. Images that have been presented throughout the year may be submitted, with any reworking and enhancement that the photographer feels is appropriate as a result of the evaluation sessions. If desirable, a single image or several images may be selected by an evaluator or panel of evaluators as the most successful. This approach is more in tune with the major artistic awards (like the Archibald). A single award is the most often format used, together with a list of finalists. If we treat this end of year extravaganza like an exhibition it can be just as rewarding. Perhaps even arrange with the club to mount the finalists and "winner" in the foyer of the building as a real "exhibition".

The model for camera clubs has a lot going for it, it is really only the format of competitions that has outlived its usefulness, the only problem is that the FCC is still in the 19th century and has failed to see where mainstream photography is today. Most young people are spending their time with online forums and blog posts, not at camera clubs. The online world lacks many things that clubs can offer, but young people run screaming from events like competitions. Time to move on.

I hope these thoughts are of some use. I have attached drafts of two tutorials that I am working on. You can see where I am heading with these.

Regards,

Michael

Mike then attached two tutorials to his email, which are attached to the end of this newsletter.

We have many members eager to take the club into new directions such as the Digital Group and the soon to be created the Audio Visual Group. The vast range of talents carried by members of this club must surely mean that contributions and critiques on the club can be a positive influence on it. Put your thoughts in writing and email them to the newsletter so that other members may take advantage of the suggestions.

### CHRISTMAS DINNER AT THE RICHMOND CLUB

Your Invitation to the End of Year Dinner.

You are all invited to the End of Year Dinner to be held at the Richmond Club on Friday 2nd December

**Time:** 6.30pm for 7.00pm

**Cost:** \$40.00 per person

**RSVP** to Charles by the **18th November**

Please feel free to invite others.

These End Of Year functions are a really enjoyable affair, which will as usual feature the Trivia Quiz. This Quiz will allow your team to pit its collective brains against the combined might of previous winners. The winning team will be awarded the Peacock Trophy, which must be returned personally for the competition next year.

### HAWKESBURY REGIONAL GALLERY

At least three exhibitions either will feature photography or including some in 2012. A Verdant Heart coming up, has a number of photographers included, Robyn Stacey and Paul Ogier being two of the best known.

As soon as the other become available retails will be published.

### ART WOLFE WORKSHOPS IN AUSTRALIA

For the first time, Seattle-based photographer, Art Wolfe will present a series of public lectures and workshops, in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, in March 2012. This is a special opportunity for Australian photographers to learn from this world renowned photographer.

*"Art Wolfe's photographs are a superb evocation of some of the most breathtaking spectacles in the world"* - Sir David Attenborough

**If you happen to be in Canberra during the coming holiday period visit the National Portrait Galley.**

The collection display includes over 450 portraits that tell extraordinary stories of encounter, exploration, independence, individuality and achievement in Australia. Visitors to the Gallery can follow the development of portraiture from oil painting to digital media. Image: Angry Anderson (detail) by Sally Robinson



**Making sense**




**contemporary LA photo artists**

*Left: Miles Coolidge (Canada/USA b1963) Stool 2006, type C photograph, 39 × 41.8 cm, gift of Geoff and Vicki Ainsworth 2009 © Miles Coolidge, image courtesy ACME, Los Angeles.*

*Right: Sharon Lockhart (USA b1964) Untitled 2007, type C photograph, 114.3 × 156.5 cm frame, gift of Geoff and Vicki Ainsworth 2008 © Sharon Lockhart*

There is a rich contemporary art scene in and around Los Angeles, due in part to the plethora of universities and museums in the area with strong photomedia programs and collections.

The Art Gallery of NSW has acquired a group of 13 photographs by artists based in Southern California, whose work deals with relations between landscape and architecture, high and low culture, representations of the body, politics and irony, word and image.

The artists include Allan Sekula, Uta Barth, Miles Coolidge, Shannon Ebner, Christina Fernandez, Ken Gonzales-Day, Anthony Hernandez, Sharon Lockhart, Catherine Opie and Mark Wyse.

11 Feb – 13 May 2012

*"There's a stunning clarity and vibrancy in Art Wolfe's wildlife portraits which are careful, often haunting, compositions"* - The New York Times Book Review

*"Art has the broadest range of excellence of any nature photographer I know"* - Galen Rowell  
*"Art Wolfe's work tells a story that is overwhelming, breathtaking and vast"* - Robert Redford.

The three workshops are accredited by AIPP - see points details below.

### VENUES & DATES

**SYDNEY** - Australian National Maritime Museum Theatre, Darling Harbour.  
 16th March - Public Lecture: 7.00 - 9.30pm  
 17th March - Seminar: 9.00am - 4.30pm

**“SUBJECT AND SUBJECT MATTER” – WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE ?** BY MICHAEL SMYTH

***This tutorial is designed to help photographers and people interested in photography to understand the purpose of a photograph and to assist in evaluating photographs based on an understanding of the photographer's intentions.***

**OUTLINE**

Whether we are a photographer or just a person who is interested in imagery, we all look at photographs and make our own evaluation of the image. We often confuse the content of the image, the “subject matter” with the purpose or message contained within the image, “the subject”. But if we don't understand what the photographer is trying to tell us, how can we make a meaningful evaluation of the success of the image ?

Evaluations or competitions held at camera clubs often fail to recognise the “subject” and only respond to the “subject matter”. This fails to understand the purpose of the image and therefore the evaluation of the image will fail.

Before we can make any meaningful assessment of an image therefore we need to understand the purpose and intentions of the Author.

**SUBJECT**

The “subject” of a photograph is the idea or message that is being conveyed in the image.

The subject can be a deep and meaningful statement, an abstract concept, or it can simply be a response to the beauty of nature. There are no limits and no taboos. Photographers are visual artists and we are free to express our ideas and feelings in any way that takes our fancy. Exceptions to this freedom would be the use of subject matter that could be considered offensive, libellous, pornographic or illegal in any way. Generally, despite these few restrictions we are free to make political or personal statements over a wide range of ideas and concepts. The only limit is our imagination.

Photographers are free to create images that need not be “documents” but represent an interpretation or “impression” of the physical or imagined world. The image can be created either by use of multiple exposure, photographic technique, addition or removal of elements or any other technique that helps support the “subject”. Therefore there are no “rules” as to what images are acceptable or not. Artificial restrictions on image content (such as only one colour added to a monochrome image) are to be avoided and photographers encouraged to explore ideas and messages with as much freedom as possible if they are to grow and develop their personal “vision” and communication style.

The “Subject” of our image is the single most important part of the photograph. If we fail to understand what the subject is, we can't make any meaningful assessment of the image before us. This is true whether we are the photographer or the viewer.

When looking at images in magazines, online and at exhibitions, make it a habit to stop and look at the image carefully and try to think of a word or phrase that describes what the images is about, not what it contains. Think about what it **means**.

Once we understand the “Subject” we can make a mental assessment of whether the photographer has succeeded in telling us something about the subject by use of the content or “subject matter” contained in the image.

**SUBJECT continued**



In the image above the subject is "Love"



In this image the subject is "the beauty of nature"

Both images use the same "subject matter", penguins, but the ideas and subjects are vastly different. Making an assessment of the success of the images based solely on the notion of "penguins" would fail because our preconceived idea of a "penguin" may not fit with one or both of these images.

**SUBJECT MATTER**

The choice of subject matter used to illustrate the idea, concept, or message contained in the photograph is a choice that the photographer will make based on their experiences, imagination and conceptualisation of the "subject". Sometimes we "see" something that screams out an idea and we capture that image with a clear idea of our subject. At other times we may have a concept that requires an image to be "constructed" to illustrate that concept.



The image above illustrates a "truth", that some people are "two faced" The image concept was developed first, then the image was constructed to illustrate the concept. See "Truth in Photography" below.

Here is another example of an image that was "constructed" in order to convey the idea. The concept was derived from watching wheelchair racing and marvelling at how the person and machine were intimately connected and become more than the sum of their parts. The concept became "Cyborg" a science fiction concept of the merging of man and machine into one entity.



Making an image that froze the movement of the athlete failed to convey the idea. By deliberately choosing a very slow shutter speed and blurring the movement blended the human and machine together in a way that reflected the concept.

In the illustration of the "two faced" person above, the image was the result of careful planning and studio work involving several images, followed by enhancement and blending in Photoshop. The idea was drawn out beforehand and the various components created. This image could not have been constructed without a "blueprint" of the final image.

The image of the "Cyborg" was created almost completely in camera, with some post production and enhancement. In both cases, the subject was conceived first, then the image was constructed to fulfil the concept.

The methods and techniques used to construct the images are not important to our appreciation of the image, what remains is the viewer's understanding of the "subject" and whether the photographer has been successful in turning the subject into an image by the use of "Subject matter".

In the final analysis, the important things to consider in evaluating and understanding images are:

Is the "subject" understandable and of interest to me (the viewer) ?

Does the image illustrate or convey the subject in an interesting and understandable way ?

Do I respond to the image, does it grab our attention (does it have "Punctum" (see Camera Lucida by Roland Barthes). If you don't respond to the image, you will instantly forget it and move on to the next one.

If your answer to these questions is "Yes" then the image is successful.

## TRUTH IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Many non photographers get confused about "**truth**" in photography. There is a misguided idea amongst the general public that photography is somehow "objective" and that any form of "manipulation" or "Photoshopping" of images should not be allowed and in some way is "wrong" or artificial.

The "truth" is that photographs have never been "objective" and that images have always been manipulated in one form or another. The earliest photographs were all monochrome and exposed over minutes or even hours. An image was manipulated in the darkroom to render a viewable image. The image thus formed could not be further from an objective reality. The technology has changed, but manipulation and enhancement of the image material remains a major part of the image creation process.

The real "truth" in photography is in the ideas used as the basis of image making. In the "two faced" example above, the idea is true - people can be "two faced", the image is "True" in the sense that it illustrates a "truth".

Images can be close to an objective view of reality (if that is possible) and photographs constructed in this way are generally referred to as "documents" or made in a "documentary style". Images used for forensics, news reporting and natural science would be considered as "documentary" in style, however they can never be truly "objective" images in any real sense and often are cold, lifeless and fail to grab our imagination.

Additionally, all images, regardless of how they are created are two dimensional representations captured at an instant of time. The "real" world exists in three dimensions over a continuum of time. Further, simple considerations such as framing, viewpoint and shutter speed can make the image more or less "objective". By the simple process of capture reality is suspended and the resulting image can never be an "objective" record of the real world.

When we look at a news photograph we hope it is as close to an "objective" record of a real event as possible. When looking at "artistic" images in exhibitions we shouldn't care about "objectivity" -it's not important in understanding the image. We should only be interested in the ideas and how effectively the photographer has been in communicating that idea to you, the viewer.

By understanding the "Subject" of the image before us we can make an assessment of the effectiveness of the image. Hopefully we can gain an insight into the mind and imagination of the photographer. If the image captures our imagination and we respond to the ideas and message we need never ask "is it true?" because that question becomes meaningless.

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## **TEN TOP TIPS \***

### **\* a ten point guide for better creative image making:**

*In no particular order, here are my ten main points to keep in mind when trying to make expressive and creative images.*

#### **1. NO RULES !**

Forget about "rules" in photography, there aren't any ! Don't be confused by artificial constraints that clubs and exhibition committees put on image entries. Many of these are created to placate special interest groups. For instance, when colour image making became popular and accessible, many traditional black and white workers thought they would be disadvantaged in competitions and exhibitions, so they lobbied for a separate category for "colour" and now have the artificial distinction of "Colour" and Monochrome" images. Things become difficult when some image makers want to use a combination of colour and monochrome in their images. The same goes for all of the other categories that have sprung up in camera clubs and exhibitions.

What about the "Rules" of composition, the "Rule of thirds" etc. These are Guidelines, not rules. Know when to use them and when to ignore them.

#### **2. REMEMBER WHAT THE STORY IS MEANT TO BE**

The single most important idea to keep in mind when creating images is the original image concept or idea that you are trying to communicate to your viewer. Every other decision you make about content, composition and presentation should reflect this purpose.

#### **3. USING PHOTOSHOP FILTERS ALONE IS NOT BEING CREATIVE**

Taking a perfectly ordinary image and scrolling through a myriad of "artistic" filters in Photoshop is not being creative. Using filters, techniques and the craft of image making **is** creative if they are used to realise the visualised image that you are working towards.

#### **4. SUBJECT AND SUBJECT MATTER**

Many camera club and exhibition judges fail to see beyond the content of the image - the "Subject Matter" and fail to recognise what the "Subject" is that the photographer is addressing. Without knowing what the subject is, it is impossible to make a proper evaluation of an image. In presenting your images try to make sure you know the difference yourself,. If you don't know what you are trying to say, chances are no one else will either.

#### **5. PREPARE YOUR IMAGE IDEAS IN ADVANCE**

Creative or conceptual images are like great paintings, they don't just happen. Draw out a rough hand sketch of your ideas before you try to capture the subject matter. Think about the lighting, viewpoint, composition and photographic language you are going to use. Keep this as a guide and try test images and refine your image making as you go.

**6. HAVE A PLAN, BUT BE PREPARED TO CHANGE**

Prepare a sketch or rough draft of your image, or have a clear vision of what you want. But, be prepared to modify or refine your ideas as you go. Just because you have a draft, don't remain locked in to that if you find something else that works better than your original idea.

**7. GET LOTS OF INSPIRATION**

Go to exhibitions, read books and observe what other artists are doing. Look at the great masters and see how they use lighting, composition and colour. Don't confine yourself to photography, look at paintings, sculpture and all art forms. Learn to understand what makes great images - the ones you remember.

Be inspired and try new things. If you are still making the same sorts of images that you did 2, 5 or more years ago, you are either brain dead or need another interest. Be anything but boring !

**8. INTERPRET, DON'T PHOTOCOPY THE WORLD**

There are places and uses for "documentary" images. Great images aren't just a recording of a place, a time or an event, they tell us what it was like - they **interpret** the story. All images are interpretations, the camera is not objective, so make it work to record how you **feel** about something, not just what you **saw**. Your images will then become your personal vision of the world that nobody else can duplicate.

**9. THERE ARE NO NEW SUBJECTS**

There really is nothing in the world that hasn't already been photographed, but there are lots of ways to tell us something about the world that has not been told before. Take a popular icon - say for instance the Sydney Opera House. It has been photographed millions of times. Make it your mission to photograph it in such a way that you are telling us something new about it.

**10. FORGET ABOUT NAMES AND DEFINITIONS, THINK ABOUT IDEAS AND MESSAGES**

Use your personal vision of the world to tell us about how you see things. Forget about definitions like "Nature", "Still life" or "Landscape" concentrate on what you feel about something and how you can communicate it to others

**11. FORGET ABOUT COMPETITIONS**

OK, there are only supposed to be ten, but this is a bonus. Forget about scoring points or getting awards, concentrate on your personal vision and ideas. Competitions are for sports people, photography is about recognition, inspiration and ideas. Don't get them confused.

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