"A Grain of Sand" by John Kane

It's Time to Get Your Fair Entries Ready (page 3)

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News and Views of Poly Photo Camera Club Members
March, 2016   Volume 7, No.2

From the Editor

This month, John Kane is our "*Featured Photographer*." We often get a very limited view of the work of many of our members. Seeing two images a month (that are often designed to appeal to a typical judge) does not give us much of a comprehensive view. I know that I didn't know much about John's work.

The excellent work (and the thoughts behind the images) that John has shown us in this month's feature have demonstrated that he is a thoughtful and creative photographer, and now I know that I want to see more of his pictures.

In the last few months, I have been working with Photoshop "stacks" and learning about their uses and capabilities. I'm sure we all have used some types of them for quite a while. But somehow (I'm not quite sure how) I have volunteered to do a workshop about them for Poly next month. So, I needed to learn more, and integrate and organize the information into a coherent, understandable discussion about how they work and what they do. They are valuable because they allow us to overcome some of the inherent limitations that have always been a part of modern photography.

That effort has prompted me to also think about the broader subject of traditional, inherent photographic limitations and how digital post-processing technologies have addressed them.

For example, we all have fought with depth-of-field issues and relationships in our pictures. That's especially true for close-up and macro photographers. But now, "*focus stacking*" can provide infinite or selective depth-of-field, without some breakthrough in camera design.

Good fisheye lenses can be expensive; and while they can produce an image of a full hemisphere, it is distorted in its own unique way.

Somewhat interesting in itself, but not very useful if we want to reproduce sections as more conventional panoramas. We can remove the distortions with the appropriate software angorithms, but the limited number of pixels in the single 360º x 180º image is insufficient to produce a good image of a smaller section.

Technology comes to the rescue with a simple hardware/software solution. Google and GoPro have created an array of 16 modestly-priced GoPro Hero4 cameras, arranged in a circle. Their images are synchronized and stitched together in a special-purpose algorithm in the assembly's computer and the output is a single, undistorted, high-resolution 360º picture. Google intends to use the system for Virtual Reality video viewing systems, but it has many other panoramic photography uses.

We have always struggled in low light situations. Slow shutter speeds – tripods – noise (or grain). One solution – the new Nikon D5 (and I'm sure others soon) has an extended ISO over 3,000,000. (Yes, that's million) Maybe there is no light level that can be considered "low" any more.

The point of this discussion is that those of us who learned our photo skills in the film era still have many of the classical limitations stored away in our semi-conscious memories, with the status of "*Photographic Truths*," and we let them limit our vision. It's time we recognized and discarded them to free our imaginations and creativity to apply to new, contemporary image making.

To help with this opportunity for creative growth, Poly Speaks will be publishing a series of articles that can help us throw away the old limitations. It won't necessarily be every month, but look for it in future issues.

Musings from the President

COMPETITION

Your heart begins to pound. Your hands turn to ice. Your image, big as life, is up there on the screen. The judge says nothing – for what seems an eternity. You frantically scan the image to see what you might have missed in editing.

Does this describe you at competition meetings? Why can't you relax and enjoy the image on the screen? After all, you worked hard on getting things right in the camera, and then in editing. Shouldn't you be confident and proud of your accomplishment? Well, yes, you most likely are proud of your work, but that image needs to please someone else – a judge.

Weeks before competition, do you check out a judge's web page to see what he/she likes or doesn't like to photograph (stay away from bugs when Judge X is there)? Do you review notes from the last time this person judged? In other words, are you staying true to yourself, your vision, your art, or are you prepping an image to please a judge?

You may end up in a rut – afraid to try anything new or even radical for fear of not pleasing a judge. Is it more important to stay on the safe road or take a chance that a judge may appreciate what you've done or tried to do.

It seems in recent years that judges have seen so many sunsets, mountain or desert scenes that it becomes increasingly difficult to attain that "Wow" impact they look for. We need to continually search for that unusual angle, lighting, subject or even editing technique. It's how we grow as artists, but trying something new is risky and the thought of a judge not liking it is scary.

We have a very talented membership such as Beverly Brock, Dan Palermo, Michele McCain, Rick Wiley and many others who have bravely experimented. A judge will either appreciate the effort or not "get it," but often, fellow club members have praise for their boldness and want to know how it was done. Receiving praise from others and knowing you've stayed true to your vision can be more rewarding than a judge's critique and score.

On the other hand, is the current judging method adequate? Does it encourage us to grow as artists? Do we, as a club, want to consider some other form of judging?

Until next month,
Happy Shooting!
Dee

2016 San Diego County Fair Entries are Due Soon!

Mad About the Fair
Your digital entries are due by April 16 for this year's exhibition.

Mounted and matted prints of accepted pictures will need to be delivered to the Photography exhibition space on May 17 or 18.

The Exhibition will be on display during the run of the fair, from Friday, June 3 through Monday, July 4

For entry categories, additional information and conditions, and specifications for entry, go to the fair web site at:
http://www.sdfair.com/index.php?fuseaction=exhibits.photo

Photographer of the Month – John Kane

   "Canon's EOS Rebel XT" was my gateway to digital photography. It led to more addictive highs from PS, LR, EOS Mark II and, more recently, the Olympus EM-1. There were just so many ways to achieve euphoria capturing and manipulating images to create a unique perspective. Higher highs came from better and different lenses, bigger memory cards, and miscellaneous paraphernalia, including faster computers and larger monitors. These both called to my inner geek and provided a creative outlet.

   Having gotten a late start in art photography, I'm still finding my voice. First was a focus on nature. I enjoyed sitting by a stream, evaluating the photo opportunities and absorbing the beauty of the moment, and still do. However, for the last fifteen months I've been hooked on studio work, and those are the images discussed here.

   The initial stimulus was a course in triggered photography at the Santa Fe Photographic Workshops.   Capturing water drops in action is engaging. There are so many avenues of approach: strike surface, lighting, background, single, double or triple drip; water tints and elasticity. Walking down those paths I ran into macro photography, the interesting subjects it can explore and the great depth of field available from photo stacking.   As an aide to addiction, studio photography allows you to satisfy your cravings at any time and in any weather.

"A Grain of Sand" (on the Cover) – A faint memory of William Blake's *Auguries of Innocence* inspired this image, "To see the World in a Grain of Sand. . . ."   The grain was glued to the tip of a pin and held aloft before a black background. A 65mm macro lens' DoF at this magnification is quite shallow, so a focus rail was needed.   The view of earth was appliqued. Full disclosure: NASA provided the North America image.

"*Little Bang*" – Drops hitting a bowl of water respond differently than those landing on a hard surface. This is a photo of a colored drop of water striking the bottom of a cordial glass that has a narrow, half-inch deep hollow. In this sort of work you never know what you'll get. Timing of the flash, water accumulation on the surface, warmth the firing solenoid transfers to the drop - all make a difference. Yes, the differences can be small, but so are the drops. Each of the session's fifty shots was unique.

"*Patient Genie*" – After reading *Light – Science & Magic,* I needed to supplement the book's theory with experience. Glass seemed to be a good place to start. It's considered one of the more difficult objects to photograph since light can go through the glass, making it invisible to the camera, or glance off it, creating unwanted glare. This is an example of dark-field lighting, where bright edges bring out the shape against a dark background. The hours spent trying to get this right tested even the genie's patience.

 "*Keeping a Level Head*"– In bright-field lighting – the inverse of dark-field – the glass is against a bright background and is defined by its dark edges. The challenge was creating the *tromp l'oeil* and getting the lighting right. Gelatin in a titled glass was tested but failed – couldn't get a clean edge where the "wine" met the glass, and the chardonnay would have been cloudy. Instead, I tilted both the shiny black surface and the focus rail 6½°, and photo stacked the wine glasses. The surface was then leveled, the beer mug photographed and PS did the rest. Lighting for the wine comes through the translucent plastic background. Strategically placed light blockers darken the glasses' edges, defining the stems and bowls. The stein needed additional down lighting to accent the head and bring out the beer's color.

"White Orchid" – Orchids were blooming in our courtyard, but what to do with them? Many beautiful, colored orchid images had been presented at the club and one more, perhaps not quite so beautiful, wasn't needed. Instead, I decided to focus on shape and texture in grayscale. One flower would suffice but required a context. Focus stacking plus learning a few new PS tricks did the job. I consider this to be my best studio piece so far.

"Daily Grind" – This two-inch wooden critter became the focus of my first significant photo stack effort. The Poly Photo project theme was kitchens, I think, and preparing a cup of Joe seemed an appropriate subject. Depth of field was achieved using a focus rail, lots of shots and stacking. Figuring out tethered shooting, focus rail setup and its computer controls, plus learning the stacking software required many a cup.

This and That
By Clark Winsor

Yes Poly, it's March. Easter Sunday falls on the 27th of March this year. It seems like time is moving faster than it ever has before. A short time ago we had questions on rules for Poly's "Project Competition." Let's follow the "*Read the Bylaws*" rule. Well guess what! There are no written rules for the "Project Competition". Our bylaws have one sentence on this competition. No wonder there's some confusion.

Section 7: "*A monthly Project Competition shall also be held at the discretion of the members.*"
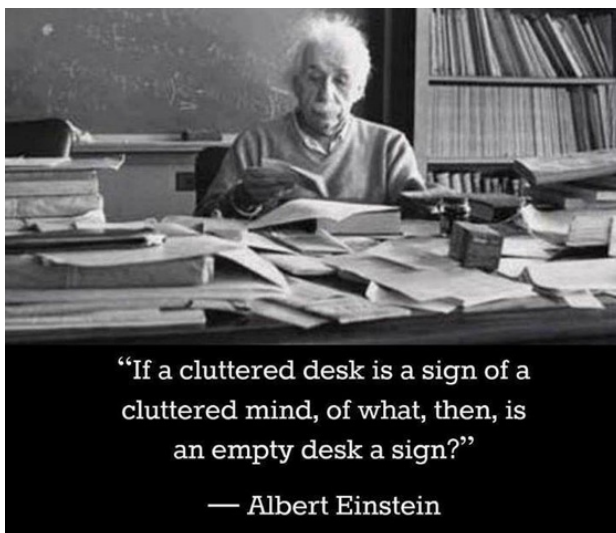
What does that mean? It is amazing, that over all the years that Poly has been doing the Project Competition that no rules were written into our bylaws. We have no written history on this competition. Richard Pasturczak came up the idea for a Project Competition sometime in the 1990's. It was created as a way to encourage Poly members to take new photos at least once a month.

The idea is to have the club select eleven different themes, one for each competition month of the year. Our monthly competition judge picks a first and second place. At year-end, we have a "Best of Project" competition to select a first and second place. Each Project entry should be created in the year after the date the subjects were announced

Many of our workshops were built around the monthly projects. This increased the likelihood of having more entries. Any images submitted in Project Competition can also be entered in any regular monthly Open competition. These rules have never changed, but Poly has changed, and with the development of the digital world, Photography has changed.

Maybe it is time to spell out, in our Bylaws, what the rules for the "Project of the Month" are. This word of mouth being passed down from generation to generation isn't working so well.

Talk to you next month.

"If a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind, of what, then, is an empty desk a sign?"

— Albert Einstein

The Photoshop Insider
By Jeff Booher

Vignettes are a simple and sometimes cheesy way of emphasizing part of an image by drawing the viewer's eye into the center of the frame. Subtle vignettes are barely noticeable and almost have a subliminal effect on the viewer, directing his or her eye to the part of the image you want them to focus on without them even knowing it. I like to add a vignette but, admittedly, sometimes I go overboard and I have to reel it back in.

Michael Fairbanks and I were discussing vignettes a few weeks ago and the conversation turned dark very quickly... So I wanted to share with you a few different ways to add a vignette to your image.

The easiest way to add a vignette is to use Lightroom or Adobe Camera Raw. From the Develop Module in Lightroom, find the Effects Panel (*fx* tab in ACR) then find the section titled "Post Crop Vignetting" and move the Amount slider to the left or right of 0 to add a vignette. Move the slider to the left and you get a dark vignette. Move the slider to the right to add a light vignette. I rarely use use a white vignette but there are times when you might want one. Say for a newborn shot or a wedding.

Adding too much vignette will make the image too harsh in my opinion. Not enough vignette and it doesn't de-emphasize the background. So what I like to do is to get the background as harsh as it will go then adjust various sliders until I get it where I like it. Slide the Feathering slider to the right will soften the vignette so it isn't too harsh but don't go too far or you won't have a vignette at all.
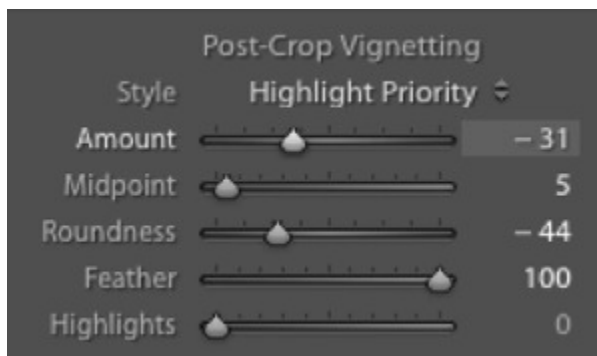
The image below is what I ended up with for the image above. Not perfect but good enough without doing a lot of work.

The nice thing about using Lightroom or ACR to add a vignette is that it will recompute the vignette if you do any cropping in Lightroom or ACR.

Adding a vignette to an image is so easy that you're going to get tired of adding vignettes.

My favorite way to add a vignette is to use Photoshop; but there are some filters out there like NIk and Topaz that give you some easy and interesting ways to add a vignette.

Nik Color Efex has 4 different methods that I have explored in my day. There are others but I will focus on the 4 in Color Efex.

Open your image in either Lightroom or Photoshop then select "Edit In > Color Efex Pro" or Click the "Color Efex Pro 4" button in Photoshop.

If you've used Color Efex before, then you know how the filter stacking works. Your image is shown and there are a filters on the left. Select the "All" category to show them all then scroll down to the "Vignette" filters. There are 3 plus one other that isn't a vignette but a typical workflow for adding a vignette in Photoshop reduced to a couple of Nik filters.

Vignette: Lens is pretty close to what you can do in Lightroom or ACR.

Vignette Filter is really interesting. The one feature I really like about this filter is the "Adapt Edges" slider. This gives you a lot of power to remove unwanted distractions from your background because it will build a mask that builds a graduated mask from the sides of the image to the edges around the subject. It does a really nice job too.

Vignette: Blur This is the coolist Nik Vignette filter ever. I love it! You can easily add a lens blur to your images that will give your foreground prominent focus. You can make the blur vignette dark or light. I chose light because it made the image not only feel more dreamy since I was adding a blur but it also made it feel less crunchy. You may not want to have a crunchy dream. I wouldn't.

The fourth way to vignette in Nik Color Efex, and there are probably others that are even less obvious, is a somewhat complicated two filter process. First add a Levels & Curves filter and darken the entire image. You may be thinking to yourself, "I could have just done this in Photoshop" and you can; but, for those who don't want to make a layer mask (or don't know how to), this may be easier...

Now stack a "Darken/Lighten Center" filter on top of that and lighten the center of the image.

Of all the Nik Color Efex Pro 4 vignette filters, this method gives you the most control over how dark you want your vignette. If you make it too dark, though, you may find it difficult to bring that back with the Darken/Lighten Center filter.

For the ultimate control, however, you have to go to Photoshop.

Start by creating a new layer and select the area to emphasize with a rectangular marquee. You can also use a circular marquee if you want. Invert the selection.

Next fill the selection with black (⇧F5). This will be the contents of my blank layer. Then remove the selection (⌘D, Ctrl+D for Windows users). The reason why I want to remove the selection is because the next step is to add a Gaussian Blur and if I have a selection the blur filter will end up leaving a hard edge and I don't want that. You want to push that blur way up until it gets soft in the image and you don't really notice a hard rectangular border anymore.

Finally, I can adjust the opacity of the vignette layer to control the amount of vignette. I can also add a layer mask and feather it in if I need to bring back the center slightly without affecting the darkening that I have applied to the edges.

Vignettes often look more compressed on smaller images, though, so be careful when you export an image. If you're reducing the size then you're most likely going to make the vignette stronger.

One other thing, add a vignette at the very end of your editing process and always put a vignette on its own layer. It is extremely difficult to work around a vignette once you've added it to your image. Chances are, if you make changes, you will probably need to rebuild your vignette.
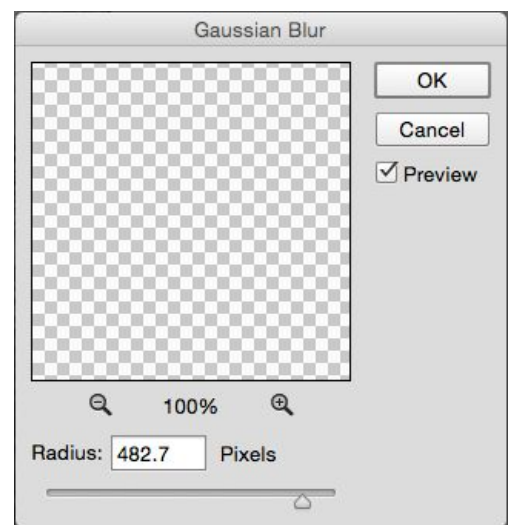
SCACC News – March 2016
Mary Anderson

We have new security doors! The city locksmith adjusted the pins in the locks for the front/back screens and front wood door. They are keyed the same as in the past but not all the older keys work. SCACC is working with club presidents to be sure those who need keys have ones that work. If you need keys and have an older set, check them out and let Darlene know if they do not work. Keep in mind you have to pull back a bit on the back door to make the key work.

2016 SCACC Officers: (April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017) were elected at the SCACC meeting on February 23 (changed from March 1). They are:
- President – Les Anderson
- 1st VP Programs – Mary Anderson
- 2nd VP Building – David Poplawski
- Treasurer – Diane Patterson
- Secretary – Josi Ross

Important upcoming dates:

Next Interclub competition is **Tuesday March 15**. Interclub consists of four SCACC clubs (Poly, Photo Nats, Darkroomers, and Fallbrook) that compete bi-monthly.

Competition viewing is open to all and starts at 7:30pm at PAB.

SCACC Year-end Judging is on **Saturday March 26 from 9am-noon**. Join us at the PAB as we jury the top photos of the year from all clubs and decide year-end winners.

Mark your calendars for **Saturday April 23 from 9am-noon**, for the SCACC Year-end Awards Ceremony. Join us for the year-end competition awards ceremony. Drinks and hors d'oeuvres provided by member clubs. Poly will be bringing sweet snacks.

Poly is scheduled to host Larry Vogel's workshop on **Thursday March 3 (changed from normal date of March 10)**. Thank you to Jeff Booher for volunteering to host. These are valuable workshops for the community and bring welcome funds to SCACC. If you want to attend, you need to sign up with Larry and there is a small fee.

The next SCACC meeting is **Tuesday May 3** at 7:00pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Quote of the Month –

" '*Manipulation*' can be effective in overcoming limitations imposed by the capabilities of cameras and lenses, or by undesirable qualities of subjects and light, and that may obscure what an image is about – what the artist sought to express and the impression they wished to impart.
<div align="right">– Guy Tal</div>

Programs and Coming Events
Sue Cerise

February 2 - Competition
March's Project Theme is "Textures"

Anything goes with this wide-ranging theme, and we encourage you to think out-of-the-box. For example, I've thought about shots of those wrinkled bedsheets you've been meaning to change, or closeups of your soggy breakfast cereal.

Our judge for this month will be **Susan Coppock.** Here's a little about her, in her own words.

"I like making photographs, not just taking them, so playing with Photoshop has been a thrill! Now, I get to take parts from photographs I have been shooting all these years, and adding new ones to create completely different and unique images. With digital imaging and Photoshop, I feel my creativity has been broadened exponentially. The future is very bright and only limited to imagination.

My business is called Night Owl Photography because I have always been a night owl when in comes to shooting photographs. I have been enthralled by the magic and beauty of the nocturnal world for most of my life. I enjoy the serendipity in being unable to visualize completely how my final images will look before I press the shutter button—the heavens seem to be in control and I love seeing what 'develops.'

I have been involved in all aspects of photography since I was a teenager. I have worked in photo labs, camera stores, owned a photo studio, taught at Palomar College, owned a camera store and custom frame shop, and currently teach photography at San Dieguito Academy high school."

March 19 Field Trips:
Celebrating the arrival of spring, we have two special field trips planned on Saturday, March 19th. They are on opposite ends of town, so one will be convenient for you, wherever you live.

The *Cherry Trees* will be in bloom at the *Japanese Friendship Garden* in Balboa Park, and the annual *Butterfly Exhibit* will be open at *Safari Park*.

For whichever one you choose, we'll be meeting at 9:00am, hopefully before the large crowds arrive. Saturday's trips may encourage you to return another day to shoot that special image you couldn't quite manage with all the other photographers jostling for space. This is a great opportunity to meet club members, and to share and learn new skills.