FEEDBACK FROM YOUR PEERS HELPS YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY IMPROVE

I am of the opinion, that as photographers, we need each other's input and support to get better at this craft. I know it sure helps me. I have had many low moments when I've looked at a theme page and decided I didn't have a chance or decided I wouldn't enter a digital or print competition because my work (or my ego) wouldn't hold up to scrutiny.

However, I decided this year, I had to overcome that fear of criticism and do what I loved and not mind if someone else didn't get it. I still have those moments, but they are short-lived now. I know in the last year I have learned a lot and my work is improving. I also know where my weak spots are and what I need to work on. How do I know that? Well, from looking at and evaluating all of your photos. When I have to sit down and write a critique on the theme page it makes me stop and think about the points that make up a good photo. So, as I see these things in your photos, some of it filters down into my work too.

Also, another way I know I'm improving is that I have received informal feedback from some of you whose work I consider to be very good. It means a lot when you take the time to seek me out and deliver your praise of my work.

So, what I guess I'm trying to say is, we shouldn't feel we are in competition with each other even though we do have competitions. We are all good and have our own special techniques and ways of capturing what is important to us.

Now, what I would like to see happening more in this club is to for each of you to seek out those people that you see making strides in their work and give them your feedback both verbal and written.

As far as the written feedback goes, I would like to throw out a challenge to all of you who vote to also fill in the comment section for every entry when you go into the theme page. I visit the themes quite often to see how others are interpreting the new topic and to admire what's there.

Okay, wait a minute! I don't want to hear anyone say that they don't have time or it takes too long. "Fuddle, duddle,"(as Pierre Trudeau would have said). Each theme runs for well over a month, so you could comment on one photo a night.

Why do I want you to do this? Well you'll get better at organizing your thoughts and making good critiques, you'll improve your eye which should translate itself into improved photos, and you will help the rest of us and lift us up to become better at this craft. And besides, who doesn't like getting attention?

Since Derek has cool software to capture statistics on our voting habits, I am using them to further my discussion. There were 14 people who voted on 28 images in Magical Mistakes, but only 8 of them made comments. That means 6 people voted but didn't make comments. We have 25 members, so just over half of you voted. What were the rest of you doing? About 1/3 of the of the membership made comments in that theme.

Okay, here's the part that's been bothering me. When I go in and look at the comments, 5 photos got one comment, and 8 photos got two comments. The winning photo got 5 comments. Why didn't the winning photo get 8 comments? In fact why didn't each photo get 8 comments, one from each of the eight people who commented? If a photo only got one comment does that mean it's not good? Of course not. What about the 8 photos that got 2 comments; those not good either? Not worth the time and effort to write something about them? I don't think so! So that's almost half the entries that garnered very little attention from the voters. Why is that?

It's disappointing when you think no one bothered to look at your work. It doesn't encourage you to want to try hard next time. You think your picture is no good, but you're not even sure why? Not helpful and very negative (yikes, a pun!)

The theme Eerie had 31 entries, 13 people voted and 11 made comments. A much better ratio. One photo had 10 comments. Wow that's great! The winning photo however, only got 7. Mmmmm? Nine photos got 2 comments, none got only 1 - whew! So the commenting was stronger on this theme. Probably, I guess, because people took a greater interest in it because of the spooky topic and the great variety of tricks and techniques used.

Okay, I get it. Some topics are more popular so more people check them out. I guess that's human nature. However, 9/31 photos only got two comments. How come? How is that helpful to those people who went to all that trouble to find their best work, edit it, and then upload it to the website? What don't they deserve the same amount of attention as those that got more comments? I'm sure they did a lot of things right. You don't have to necessarily like a photo or even think it's very good to find something good about it. There are so many things to comment on; the angle of focus, the composition, the mood, the story, the point of view, the colour, the framing, the subject, light, clarity… need I go on?

So, I'm hoping by now you've caught the drift of what I'm getting at. If you vote in a theme, then you need to go in and comment on every picture that's entered. Why? Okay, I'll say it again. *Because it develops your skills to critique positively, it helps the photographer see what are the strengths and weaknesses of his work, and it shows us that our work is worthy of the time it took you to make the comments.* Oh, by the way, the more you do this the better you'll get at it and the faster you'll become at thinking on your feet, so to speak.

So, you have two things to keep in mind if being a member of this great club is important to you. Give lots of verbal feedback to other members when you see something of theirs that you like and take to the time to savour and enjoy it, and then comment on each and every photo for each and every theme when you choose to participate. I'll be checking those results. Thanks!
Cathy
NWPC newsletter editor

Outings

October's outing to **St Peter's Cemetery** in New Westminster was great fun. Approximately 15 of us showed up before it got dark and spooky. The weather was clear and dry and the sun was already sinking leaving nice outlines, silhouettes and shadows. A few people brought some great props such as special lights, a bridal gown, a skeleton and a mask and cape. At least those are the things I noted, so if I left something out, well I've just forgotten since then. Brenda and Monica posed as ghostly brides, we had a great skeleton which gave us no end of patient poses and Derek's son, Daniel, posed as a foreboding creature in mask and cape. We pretty much worked as a group and got a good variety of shots. Thanks to all who brought special lights and props and to the people who so willingly posed for the rest of us. It was **SPOOK**tacular!

Photo credits:
Graveyard Spectre - Karen Justice
Untitled - Lisa Chose

Please check out the link to see the photos.

http://nwphoto.org/galleryOutings.php?oid=oUt522585af3eee6&gid=oUt522585af3eee6

YVR Outing

Approximately 8 of us met at the Bill Reid sculpture in the International terminal. After agreeing to meet later for lunch, we split up and started working on the list of items Karen had given us to photograph. The first side of the page contained a list of 14 things which were easy enough and straight forward. It ranged from a triangle pattern, call me, floating Foncies (huh?!) to teeth & hair & dorsal fin, and green and blue above. The terminal has so much to see, it was hard just focusing on the main list, so I, and Im sure the others, deviated and took lots of interesting additional pictures. There were 5 poems on the back containing clues as to the objects you were to find and shoot. That's when things got a bit sticky for me cause I'm impatient and I just want someone to say, "Hey there's a humungous stuffed Moose over there! Go takes its picture!" Luckily, I kept meeting up with Karen who kindly translated her 'doggerel' (her words!) and was able to find most of the remaining items. We met for a nice lunch at the airport White Spot and then finished up our lists. After everyone had left, I stayed on longer, as there was just so much to see and capture. Finally, I was almost too tired go home, and decided I'd better leave. On my way out, I met Tim S., who was just starting his photo tour. Again another enjoyable outing. The list gave us some fun stuff to focus on and to discuss our various interpretations of our shots. Thanks to Karen for putting it all together!

Photo credits: *Teeth & Hair & Dorsal Fin* - Brenda Fairfax
Not Fred & Wilma's Bags - Cathy Snyder

Please check out the link to see the photos.

http://nwphoto.org/galleryOutings.php?oid=oUt522586cb248cd

Theme Competition Summary
Eerie

Position	Title	Artist	Points
1	In the Window	Shona LaFortune	52
2	Eerie Morning Sunrise	Bruce Fairman	33
3	Double Vision	Barb Adamski	28
4	Forgotten Field	Peter Ellis	27
5	Enter At Your Own Risk	Brenda Fairfax	
6	The Sleeping Dead	Tim Stewart	
7	The Happy Couple	Karen Justice	
8	Night of the Bird Invasion	Glen Marcus	
9	Alone	Marc Kinnee	
10	Witches Moon	Peter Ellis	
10	Untitled	Peter Ellis	
10	Skytrain Emerging From Fog	Bruce Fairman	
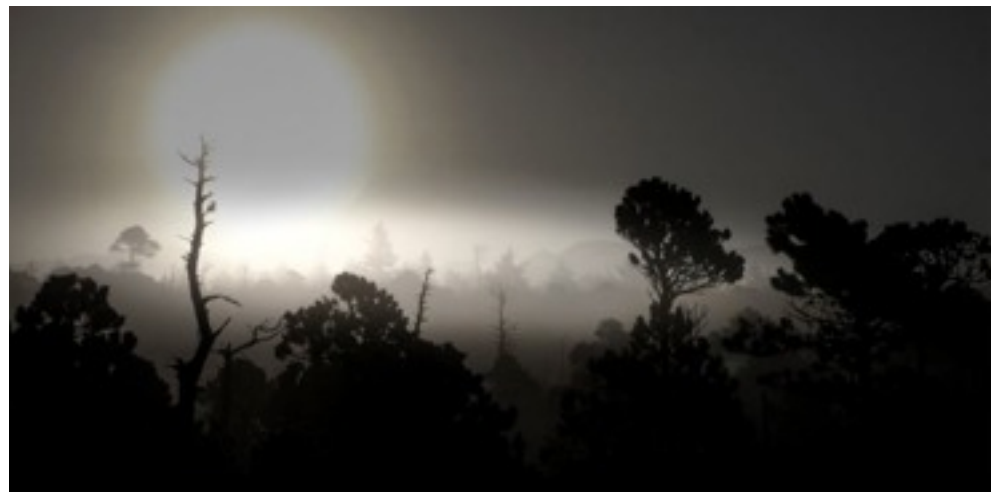
Print Competition Results

Position	Title	Artist	Score
1	Tea Light	Nancy Matheson	26.5
2	Sunrise Through Fog	Bruce Fairman	25
2	Degnem	Bruce Fairman	25
3	Evening Feeding	Nancy Matheson	24.5
3	Medicine Lake	Tim Stewart	24.5
4	Surf & Silhouettes	Cathy Snyder	24
4	The Grand Canal	Ben Whiting	24
4	Amaryllis	Peter Ellis	24
5	Bonnie Blue	Kelly Lambert	23.5
5	Pumpkin Harvest	Tim Stewart	23.5
6	Over the Dome	Marc Kinnee	23
6	Elvis Lives	Karen Justice	23
6	Waiting for High Tide	Nathan Emmerson	23
6	Roses	Simon Goulet	23
7	Cemetery Monument	Marc Kinnee	22.5
7	Silhouette	Cathy Snyder	22.5
7	Lakeside Formation	Nathan Emmerson	22.5
8	First Flakes	Keith Griffiths	22
8	Colossus 2	Robert Jost	22
9	The Vender	Karen Justice	21.5
9	Morning Bliss	Keith Griffiths	21.5
10	Mission Stairs	Peter Ellis	21.25
11	Airborne	Kelly Lambert	20.5
12	Simply Hooked	Ben Whiting	20.
12	Longing figure	Simon Goulet	20

Smile!
A Portrait Primer
Shona LaFortune

Not all of us shoot portraits on a regular basis unless studio portraiture is part of our employment. In fact, many of us avoid anything to do with faces. But here we are in holidays seasons, with an upcoming year of celebrations and possibly reunions, and the inevitable requests for photographs because you're a photographer. So even if your photographic specialty is macro shots of bugs, you can do this.

Studio portraits are a whole different scenario, so let's concentrate on the casual family stuff of which memories and albums are made. You know that when you are gone, no one will care about those bugs, but the last family dinner before Uncle Joe succumbed to . . . whatever . . . will be cherished in albums forever. Well, unless Uncle Joe was a horrible person, but never mind . . .

In the commercial world, a good portrait is (usually) flattering, but no matter who takes the picture, no one wants to look unattractive or overweight.   Consider their own vision of themselves and show respect for them.   Don't make them into something they're not comfortable with.   That means no compromising situations where they've had one or two too many, no shots with their mouths full or eyes closed. Those get deleted (unless they are the only shots and you have the ability to perform Photoshop Magic, which of course requires many years of study . . .)   However, even the simplest of software (of often the camera itself) can fix the dreaded "red eye" which is really only desirable in those costumed Halloween shots.

These days, technological advances have rendered the horrible exposure boo boos almost obsolete. No more waiting to discover that the photos "didn't turn out". But there are still other considerations:

Choice of Lens
Most of us know that shooting with a wide angle lens can distort (it can be fun to have big feet towards the camera, but face on, features are not pretty) unless you back off so much that your subjects are little tiny toys in the frame.   A lens in the 80-100mm range is considered about right for portraiture. Take advantage of the experience of others, and start there.   Depending on the event, a few wide angle shots to set the scene are more than enough.

Backgrounds
Your camera may have a "portrait" setting. This often includes an aperture suitable to blur the background, pre-flash to avoid "red-eye" and maybe even a sensor to make sure everyone is smiling. Personally, I can do without the phony, frozen smiles of the "everyone say cheese" era, but that's your choice. Anyway, back to aperture. An "environmental portrait", where you want to show someone in their place of work, hobby room or even that European city square fountain (insert personal bias comment here), require a smaller aperture (say f11 or f16) so that you can get some/all of the background in focus, since it's part of the story.   If the background is not part of the story, it should be unobtrusive, and an aperture wider than f8 would be more effective to blur your background.   Of course, the farther your subject is from the background, the softer it can be made and, as a bonus, you won't have such a harsh flash shadow.

Focus
Cameras today make this pretty easy. Manual focus on most point & shoot (P&S) cameras can be pretty tedious, but make sure your auto-focus is catching your subject, and not the background. With people, that's usually easy. With flower stems, not so much, but fortunately we're not discussing flower stems. I prefer manual focus with an SLR, but that's a personal choice, not a recommendation. One important thing about portraits - it's long-established that you should focus on the eyes.   We are pretty hard-wired to watch eyes, and if they are not sharp, the whole image will feel unfocused. Or something else will be and that's not necessarily where you want people to look. 'nuff said.

Posing/Composition
This is a big one and is obviously determined by how candid or formal your photograph is intended to be. Candid portraits are often wonderful, catching people at their most natural, in conversation or engaged in an activity. Those need lots of shots to get it right but really say more about your subject that any stiff "say cheese" portrait will. Usually by the time you've been flitting around shooting everyone and everything, people pay you no notice, and you have more time to zoom in from across the room or park.   If it's a more formal deal, where you have been asked to take some family portraits at the annual picnic, try not to take it too seriously. Developing a bit of a rapport and joking around a little can make even the most camera-phobic subject lose that stressed body language. Whether individuals or a group, the subject should look and feel comfortable and their pose should be in keeping with their character.   We have all seen photography where people were contorted into unusual positions or acting "silly". That's fine if you're being paid to model, but you don't want mom to say "Jan would never act like that!"   Forcing people out of character is not conducive to healthy relationships.

It stands to reason that vertical formats are more suitable for singles or couples (unless something in the background or adjacent to them is really essential to the story, e.g. Uncle Ron with his newly restored '57 Chevy) and horizontal formats work better for groups. Rule of thirds can't hurt for single shots, make sure no one is blocking anyone else.   You can arrange people in a traditional "tall ones in the centre" way, or small to large, forming an implied triangle that can be interesting. Some, um, larger subjects can go at the back, and/or have them stand slightly sideways to minimize the apparent visual space they use. Watch out for stray bits of hair and similar annoying distractions like garbage on the picnic table or an adjacent bright table lamp, and check the background for posts, trees, framed pictures and the like "growing" out of heads. I've seen even experienced wedding photographers miss these. It's really painful to Photoshop that stuff out later.

Most people have been photographed before and have a fairly good idea of how to behave. You really don't need to tell them to smile, but counting down from 3 (no more or they get nervous) might help them put on the face they think is wanted. Or tell everyone to stick out their tongues and then grab the shot when they laugh. Then take a few more and you might get something really natural. Then take a few more.

A tripod is really helpful. It lifts you above the category of everyone else at the event running around with compact cameras, helps you compose more carefully and lets you make camera adjustments without having to recompose every time you change a setting.

Lighting

Last but definitely not least, light is everything in photography. The digital advantage over film, is "white balance", where your camera tries to keep the colours natural, so you don't have to decide between all flash or tungsten film for indoors without flash, or worry about a warming filter in shade and so on.

The most flattering light is soft light through a window, or in the shade outside, so if you have a choice, see if you can move people into better light (which of course you started scouting for as soon as you arrived). If your subjects are in the shade, and some of the background is sunny, your camera may expose for the sun, so learn how to compensate for that with your particular camera, or keep the bright stuff out. Mixed sun and cloud will make everything look weird and spotty so really try to avoid that. Your viewers' eyes will go to the light areas first, then the eyes, so keep that in mind.

Quality of light, meaning soft/diffused vs. hard is a consideration you often don't have control over in a casual setting. Soft light usually flatters children and women, and harder light can bring out details in an older, character face. But the older character may not wish to be depicted as full of wrinkles, so show some respect. That sort of treatment may be better in a more formal shooting environment where you are looking for a particular effect.

Angle of light comes into play too. The classic portrait 3/4 angle for the light has merit as it shows some texture but is still reasonably flattering. You have to check your environment for the best opportunities, but don't forget to look at the angle of the sun/shadows and give it a little thought. Or, you can get into reflectors and all kinds of diffusion attachments for your flash too, but if you are comfortable with that, you don't need this article.Inside, you might get away without flash if the lighting is strong (e.g. a hall or banquet room) but if your camera is forced to increase the ISO, be prepared for digital "noise" (coloured grain) that can just scream "amateur". Sometimes you are stuck with that and it might help to force your camera to an ISO like 800 (none of this 3200 unless you have a pretty good camera) and live with a little subject blur. Tripods are good here, allowing you slower shutter speeds than the hand-holding high shutter, large aperture your camera will want to default to. In some environments, though, a tripod really restricts your angles, stabs everyone in the crowd as you move, and makes you very obvious, thereby removing the incognito advantage. So hand-hold for candids and tripod for more formal portraits is a good guideline.

Unless you are crazy serious about using all your equipment (see "don't need this article" reference above), most of us will rely on on-camera flash. An off-camera flash that you can aim a bit is nice, and if the event warrants and you are comfortable with it, by all means go for it. Flash outside is almost always a good thing. You don't want full power, just a little fill and even the lamest little P&S camera will have enough power to throw a little fill to a reasonable distance.   Most cameras have some sort of fill-flash setting, or read the manual and try a few shots. Check the histogram and/or the image afterwards to see if any tweaking is necessary. A touch of light will mean it doesn't matter whether your subjects are in sun or shade, will put a bit of light in their eyes, fill in unflattering shadows and give you more choice of aperture (e.g. in full sun your camera will stop down and your background will be sharp all the way to the alley a block away). For flash indoors, try to keep your subjects away from walls, where you get those really ugly black shadows behind them, resulting in all your shots looking like they were taken in the 50s . . .

Batteries

Ok, this is really last. Start with batteries fully charged and if all possible bring a spare (or spares if you use AA's). Flash and lots of shots can suck that power down. A dead camera means you are done for the day, which may not be in keeping with your promise to give everyone lots of photos.

My apologies to Ben for not including this in the previous newsletter.

I have had another one of my photos published in a glossy magazine, this time in "Engineering and Mining Journal". It appears in the "Special Report: Mining in Mexico" edition.

These kinds of photos for magazines may not be the most artistic shots, but they do tell a story. In addition, there is sufficient negative space (i.e. blank sky) on which the editors can superimpose text. Ben Whiting P.Geo

Caption: "Diamond drill rig at the Coneto silver-gold project, Coneto de Comonfort, Durango State, Mexico."

Some useful links contributed by members:

Here is a link for a free photography e-book (Brenda)
http://craftandvision.com/books/craft-and-vision/

Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibit is back at the Royal BC Museum. November 29 - April 6 for members who might want to check it out. (Brenda)
http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/exhibitions/upcoming/2013-wildlife-photographer-of-the-year/

This one from Keith:
http://fraserriversafari.com/safari-tours/photography-tours/

Hello CAPA members,

The current issue of the Pacific Zone News is now available online in full colour at www.capapac.org It contains interesting articles and information about photographic events coming up in the new year. Along with the regular seasonal events, CAPA is also hosting a series of photographic days with André Gallant. All the details are in the newsletter. You may also want to note that we have a new Outings Co-ordinator, detlef Klahm (not, that's not a typo, detlef prefers his name spelled with a small d). In order to provide additional benefit for Individual CAPA membership, we decided that the CAPA Outings would be for CAPA. Individual members only (they could, of course, bring a guest who might be interested in exploring CAPA membership). Members of Camera Clubs that are CAPA members would only qualify to attend an outing if they are also Individual CAPA members. detlef is an experienced outings co-ordinator as he has done this effectively for many years for the Langley Camera Club. He is also the co-ordinator of Photo Tours for CPX2015. detlef is an www.paintwithlight.net . While, understandably, the initial focus will be primarily the Lower Mainland, as this is where detlef lives and where we have a concentration of CAPA members, he is also interested in pursuing other ideas. So, for those of you who live away from the Greater Vancouver region, detlef would be very happy to discuss with you any ideas that you may have for outings in your area, or how this position can be improved. Feel free to contact him at paintwithlight1@hotmail.com Many thanks are extended to Neil le Nobel who served as the outings co-ordinator for the past several years and organized some very interesting outings.
All the best to each of you as we enter this wonderful holiday season.
Larry Breitkreutz, FCAPA
Director – Pacific Zone

Hi Everyone !

My name is detlef. Larry asked me to look after CAPA outings for the next little while. I will try to keep each outing as diverse as possible. If anyone has any ideas for future outings, I am all ears! So here goes.

January 11, 2014

Steveston/Richmond in the morning !We will meet at 7 am by the pier. Hopefully we will have a wonderful sunrise, but there are many things to photograph even if it is overcast. Here is a link to a map where Steveston is located

https://maps.google.ca/maps?q=steveston+in +richmond&ie=UTF-8&hq=&hnear=0x5485e1d78ef4de71:0x2a2ef4540ffa2bc2,Steveston, +Richmond,+BC&gl=ca&ei=0wiYUpmmFMLYoATKtYK4Bg&ved=0CIQBELYDMAs

Please contact me if you will attend Please bring a tripod, cable release and a wide to long lens. After approx. 2 hours of shooting we will head to a restaurant for a coffee or a bite to eat.

February 8, 2014

Shooting a model in China Town/Vancouver + more. We will meet in China Town by the large Gate. For this outing I will be bringing a semi-pro model to the shoot. I will need to charge $ 25 per person to pay the model(s) (may be more than one) if the interest is significant. This is not a class, but an opportunity to shoot a model. I will help to answer questions about lighting and posing. Choose a wide to medium long lens/zoom or a macro lens. A flash is helpful. If you have any question about what to bring please e-mail me. This will be a two hour shoot. After the shoot we will head to a restaurant for a coffee or a bite to eat.

You will have to confirm if you are attending this outing/shoot. Please address any questions to paintwithlight1@hotmail.com or www.paintwithlight.net

https://maps.google.ca/maps?ie=UTF-8&q=chinatown+vancouver&fb=1&gl=ca&hq=China +Town&hnear=0x548673f143a94fb3:0xbb9196ea9b81f38b,Vancouver, +BC&cid=12815050245114430955&ei=OAuYUpvUH4XXoATXhIKgDA&ved=0CKABEPwS

Gallery North

Come appreciate the beautiful works of art on display at Gallery North inside the North Delta Recreation Centre located at **11415 84th Avenue, Delta, BC (604)952-3045**.

More information available here. Click here for schedule.
The North Delta Recreation Centre is officially open **Monday to Wednesday & Friday 8:30AM - 4:45PM** and **Thursday 8:30PM - 8:00PM** but, is often open late in the fall, winter and spring while people play hockey.

EMAIL US if you're interested in displaying for 2014!

From the website

Our final Outing for 2013
Our December photo outing is to the **Burnaby Village Museum**, for the **Heritage Christmas**. There are many good photo opportunities; the shimmering lights, the new, snowfall display, a new display with 400, sound-reactive, lights at the bandstand that twinkle and change colours in response to sound, new decoratively lit and beautifully adorned transformed eco-sculptures. There's lots to see and do. There'll be a great variety of good subjects to photograph and opportunities to try your hand at capturing coloured lights.

We hope to see you at the Burnaby Village Museum 6501 Deer Lake Ave. Burnaby, from 4:00 - 6:00. We'll meet at the front gate. Please contact Monica at outings@nwphoto.org if you are coming so she'll know to wait for you. Admission is free!

And finally!
Have you checked out out forum page? There's lots of interesting topics for discussion. So, have a look and add your comments!

http://nwphoto.org/resForums.php

FYI
Official website for CAPA's Pacific Zone: www.capapac.org