Los Gatos - Saratoga Camera Club Newsletter

Vol. 30 Issue 12 December 2008

2008 Calendar

December

1 Competition Color and Travel (slides/digital images)
Color and Monochrome (prints)

15 NO MEETING Annual Awards Potluck Dinner moved to January 12th.

2009

January

5 Competition Color and PJ (Slides/Digital Images/ Prints)

12 Annual Awards Potluck Dinner - 6:30PM

Highlights from the November 17, 2008 Board of Directors Meeting:
There was a lengthy discussion regarding hospitality and refreshments. Airdrie Kincaid proposed to have three people assigned to bring refreshments to each meeting, to be done from our membership list in alphabetical order. If it is a member's turn to bring refreshments and he/she cannot attend the meeting, then it is the member's responsibility to get a substitute; motion was passed.

It was also decided that the year-end awards potluck dinner would be held on January 12, 2009, and that there would be no meetings on December 15th or January 19th.

Don Schremp presented the DIGITAL PROJECTOR COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS, which are based on extensive research. The Committee recommends that the club purchase an Optima HD80 Projector and a new 8 x 8 screen. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the pros and cons of owning a projector vs. rental. The cost of replacement bulbs is also a factor because they are expensive. Steve Stark made a motion to purchase the projector; motion passed.

Marty Weisberg reminded everyone that he, Harvey Gold and Joseph Grappa had pledged to buy a new screen for the club.

Thoughts on Photography Competitions[1]

by Bill Rau

Almost inevitably, experts say that really good photographs must evoke some form of emotion from viewers. They also say that our own emotions and attitudes guide us—in choosing what we photograph and in how create a good photo.

I've always found both of those aspects of photography difficult to accomplish. What is good to me—because I know the feelings I had, I know the context and story an individual photo tells to me—is not necessarily considered good or meaningful by others. I keep asking myself why that is. So far, I've come up with three explanations.

First, perhaps I'm not effectively capturing the emotion that I feel when I take a photo. Second, it is really hard to express cumulative feelings in one photograph. Third, I don't know enough to evoke my photographic meaning so others have an emotional reaction to a specific image.

All this ruminating brings me to considering competition nights. During the first two years I was a Club member, I was too intimidated to submit more than one or two images. Those were readily dismissed by the judge and I was hurt. Later, however, when I received two ribbons in one night, the thrill of competition was there. I've done well in competition during the last couple of years and am pleased with that recognition. But I am increasingly uneasy with monthly competitions. I enjoy looking at all the photos—the Club has so many good photographers! I appreciate the insights and technical skills of all the judges in assessing images they see so quickly—the judges really work.

The process goes by so quickly, however. I don't have time to absorb the impact of individual images or develop a sense of the context in which the image was taken. Usually, whether an image is awarded a ribbon or not, I am left without a sense of wonder, without that emotional impact good images are supposed to have. Could that be because I don't have enough time to react? Does our focus on technical elements leave out something? Of the thousands of images entered in SSCC competition over the past several years, I vividly remember only three of those photographs. I think I might remember more if we somehow gave more attention within the competition environment on photos or groups of photos that capture and communicate feelings and stories. Perhaps the problem is within me. That I admit.

But I keep wondering if there are alternative ways to display our images. Ways that can create more of a context, tell a fuller story, provoke a more sustained emotional appeal. To me, displaying more than one image at a time might do that. The Body of Work competition (now held only every other year) is meant to do that.

Might the Club consider some variations for competitions?
I welcome your ideas and comments.

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[1] Reprinted from the November 2007 issue of Cable Release, the newsletter of the Silver Spring Camera Club of Maryland.

Rules - Friend or Foe?[2]

by Joseph Miller

As we grew as photographers we learned "rules" to help us produce acceptable pictures. Some of these rules were don't put the horizon in the center, or a person in a photograph should have a catch light in the eye(s). In many camera club competitions some 75 percent of all images must be eliminated before ribbons can be given and judges often rely upon rules to justify their decisions.

Where is it written that the horizon should not be in the center? Where is it written that there must be a catch light in the eye(s)? Where is it written that the subject should be placed at the rule of thirds? Where is it written that all pictures must have a subject?

Certainly rules can be helpful as guidelines, but they are not sacred. They can and often should be ignored. Photography would be rather boring if all images marched to the same drummer. The best photographers learn the rules but never become rule-bound.

Amazing modern technology allows us to easily produce images that are technically competent. It is almost automatic to produce a technically correct pretty picture of a pretty scene. But what if we want to be more than just technically correct? How helpful, or how restrictive, is an allegiance to rules when we seek to produce images having emotion and feeling? In my view, there is only one rule to follow in photography:

never take a picture with the lens cap on.

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[2] Reprinted from the November 2007 issue of Cable Release, the newsletter of the Silver Spring Camera Club of Maryland.