Viewfinder

Steyning
Camera Club
Newsletter

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Editor: Jim Jenkins



Amberley Outing

On the afternoon of Sunday, 4th August - back in the days of sun and warmth, several members of the Camera Club joined Angela and Peter at the Amberley Chalk Pits Museum. After an introductory talk by Angela we set off looking keenly at all manner of mechanical devices, modes of transport, ye olde buildings and an abundance of plant life. Guidance was always at hand explaining the intricacies of camera, exposure and composition. Bodies were to be seen crouching, kneeling and occasionally in horizontal posture. Much was learned and all was greatly enjoyed.

Later in the month we were invited by Angela and Peter to take our slides for comment and tips on mounting procedures. All agreed it had been a very helpful venture.

Rex

Coffee Morning At Cliff And Virginia's

We were very lucky with the weather for our third annual coffee morning and were very pleased to see so many of our Club Members and friends. This was the best day yet with a huge Raffle, and very successful Bring and Buy Stall. I hope everyone managed to pick up a bargain. Many thanks to everybody who helped so much on the day and also for their raffle prizes and donations to the Bring and Buy.

I think we will be having a new venue for next year's Coffee Morning, more news of this when it is finally confirmed.

Club funds were boosted by £104.20 and this will help to cover the costs for our 25th Anniversary year.

Programme 96/97

I would like to apologise for the programmes being rather late but we had a few problems collating the final layout. It was also thought that a comprehensive guide to all the club's competitions, rules, and examples of spotting slides, etc. would be helpful, especially to new members. If you have any questions or even suggestions on this new guide please have a word with either Ken or myself.

The programme for next season is already being considered and if there are ideas for practical evenings that would enlighten our members, i.e. if enough people want instruction on a specific subject such as macro photography, portraits, still life, or techniques such as black and white printing, slide processing, or mounting, I will endeavour to find a suitable speaker/instructor. This means I am putting the ball in your court to some extent so please tell me what you want and I will try to arrange it.

It was really great to see such a good entry of prints and slides for our first competition evening - I hope the comments of the judge, Ian Betts, were found to be constructive and may have sown the seeds for even better work. Well done everybody.

Cliff

Get Well Wishes

We were all very sorry to hear that Tony Leazell has had a spell of bad health and has had to resign his position as Treasurer.

Very best wishes from all our members for a speedy recovery Tony and we look forward to seeing you and Audrey at our club meetings in the near future.

Wanted - Items For The Next Viewfinder

If you can manage a small article/report on any event that might be of interest to other club members, or if you would like to advertise any camera, darkroom equipment, **please let me have the details for inclusion in the next Viewfinder.**

Cliff

Thanks To Steyning Photobooks

Thanks to Ron and Sue Clark for continuing to sponsor our programme and for kindly donating various photographic books for club raffles, etc. They run an extremely successful book supply company from a warehouse on the Mackley Industrial Estate, Small Dole, and have a showroom with a vast range of instructional manuals/photographic books/collectors' books and have invited club members to visit them during normal working hours.

If there is a photographic book you are particularly looking for give them a ring on 01273 494999.

Studio Shoot

Anyone who has seen my work as a photographer will know that I have no particular speciality - in fact I will photograph almost anything which gets in the way.

I had always wanted to try my hand at some abstract and classical nudes, so when our Honorary Secretary showed me a letter she had received early in the year from "Studio Elizabeth" with details of her photographic studio in Shoreham, it made me think that before I got too old and shaky I should have a go.

John Hedgecoe's marvellous "New Book of Photography" gave me some inspiration so I telephoned Elizabeth for further details. Elizabeth herself was helpful and friendly and suggested I visited the studio first to see what they could offer.

I did not know what to expect when I called one evening at a modern terraced house. It was however much larger than it appeared, having been extended. The front room could quickly be converted into a small studio and dressing room with Prolinca lighting, various backdrops, and "sets" for glamour work which did not particularly interest me. There was even a "garage" set if you wanted to pose your model with spanners and a hydraulic jack - no thanks!

There was a choice of models available (all very attractive), but Elizabeth suggested Laura who was an artist and experienced in posing for art schools and photographic work. A date was fixed for a two hour shoot and I told my biggest fan what was planned. Approval and encouragement was given.

The day of the shoot arrived and I was slightly apprehensive. I had however done quite a bit of homework and had a number of examples of what I wanted to try and achieve.

Elizabeth's son-in-law Paul was already there setting up lighting and to help with the technical stuff. His wife was making tea and coffee, so it was quite a family affair.

Laura arrived and was at once easy to get on with. Attractive and intelligent she had just returned from Spain and an exhibition of her paintings of which she had brought some photographs.

Over coffee we discussed what I wanted to do and then it was lights, camera, action! Paul checking the lighting and suggesting the exposures and bracketing while soft music played in the background. Laura knew exactly what was required so in a sense it was easy, but it was also hard work as I had to concentrate on what I was doing with the camera. Elizabeth kept everyone supplied with bottled water as it was quite hot under the lights.

We had a break at half time for tea and biscuits and a change of film and then went on to complete the shoot. We overran by about half an hour but nobody seemed to mind or want more money, least of all Laura who seemed very happy with the way things had gone. There is, of course, a twist to the tale. Time is money and in my haste I broke the first rule of photography and failed to load the second roll of film correctly. All was lost, which naturally included some of the best shots. Talk about the one that got away!

Equipment: Canon AE1, Standard lens and Tamron 80-210mm zoom, Tripod, Kodak Elite 200.

Studio Elizabeth is at:- 11 Wolstonbury Walk, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex BN43 5GU, Tel. 01273 461059

1996 fees (all inclusive)
One to one £50 per hour per person
*Two people £28 * * * *
*Three people £17 * * *

However, Laura agreed to a re-shoot and Elizabeth offered reduced fees, so all was well in the end, although some of the magic moments of the first occasion were lost forever.

What about the end results? Some good, some not so good, but I felt the experience was well worth the effort, and I know now this type of photography is not easy.

Laura was a delight, Elizabeth was pleased, and my biggest fan also approved, so what do the judges think? I'm not sure I really care too much. Photography should be for one's own pleasure, but if others like what you do then that's great.

Roger Tapner.



Calendar Of Forthcoming Events

Wed. 20th Nov. 1996 - The Regnum Print Competition at Littlehampton.

Venue: Woodlands Centre, Rustington. Time: 7.30pm. Judge: Graham Devenish ARPS

Wed. 27th Nov. 1996 - Competition Round 2 being judged by Hilly Hoar ARPS from Petworth. The set subject is "Floral" and as usual there are also open slides, open prints and the very popular "snapshop" competition as well.

Wed. 11th Dec. 1996 is our special **Xmas Social** - please bring along something to nibble. The club will be providing the liquid refreshment. The entertainment for the evening will be a Mix'N'Match slide competition between two teams of club members picked on the night. The idea is for each member to bring three slides with them on the evening - any subject - and these will be pooled and used to try to match a slide shown by the opposing team. If you have not taken part in a mix'n'match I can assure you they are great fun. Judge to be arranged! It was also proposed that we have a lighthearted raffle of wrapped prizes of small value.

ALSO on 11th December - The Steyning Christingle - well worth trying a few night shots of the illuminations and characters - perhaps a chance to use your flashgun before you come along to the social!



Title or "No Title" ?

Several times in the last weeks, and for several reasons, I have found myself again questioning the traditional Club approach to competitions. This time it is all about titles. Title or "No Title" ? Many judges will say that a photograph should not be judged by its title, yet once or twice in recent competitions, we have heard the title of a picture brought into question. Is it appropriate to what we see ? Does it help or hinder ? Remember my discussion about the difficulties of comparing various subject in open competitions ? This, I think, is where the problems of titles begin. Let's consider some arguments about what a title contributes to a picture and whether it is a good thing.

I gained my ARPS distinction in the Visual Art - Pictorial category. The panel requires fifteen images to be presented as a unified set. There are three main criteria to be considered. Firstly, the subject matter and colour / mood must be complementary throughout the set. Then the photographer's own style must be plainly in evidence. And finally, each photograph must be strong enough in its own right to stand alone as a pictorial image; that is to say that the subject and the photographer's intended message must be obvious to the viewer without words as an aid. Titles are, therefore, not allowed. One could argue that if a title is required in order to understand the mood, or to appreciate the relationships between elements of the picture, then the picture fails to portray the very thing the title describes.

However, a title can be helpful to both judge and photographer, particularly the beginning photographer. Use of a title to describe the pictorial image on view can give the judge a clue as to the real intention of the picture, and enable constructive criticism as to how the message might have been better put over in the photograph. However, if the picture does not give the message suggested by the title, whether it is a fine image or not, then one must ask whether it is the image or the title that needs attention. Who knows ? General inclusion of titles can lead, sometimes, to fine images being degraded slightly or misunderstood for reasons of an inappropriate title

What about other subjects ? Informative or documentary shots all seem to benefit from an identification. The name of a historic building, the name of a portrait subject, the species of an animal, the name of a place helps to give the shot context. Some approaches to photography such as journalism, or scientific or industrial work requires not only a title, but a full description of the nature of the subject and the situation, the reasons for its existence or state, and sometimes the use to which the photograph is intended. The RPS Nature, Journalism and Applied categories, to name but a few, do have very specific titling requirements.

And that brings us back to the Open club competition. Should we have titles or not ? In an ideal world, my personal choice would be for titles to be optional on pictorial images. "No Title" or simply no title would require me to make my own interpretation, judging the image only on what is seen in the picture and whether the message is strong. (Whether the interpretation is the same as the photographer's is another question entirely - it is not for me to state the photographer's intention, only to decide what it says for me). A pragmatic approach for most subjects in our club competitions, though, would be to keep titles very simple; place or species names for example. And if we use humorous titles, or titles which include a mood or interpretation, we should do so carefully so as to ensure the judge and the audience will not be misled. And at the end of the day, titles help us competition secretaries so they can't be all bad !

But the most important matter of all has nothing to do with titles. That is all about making sure that we think very carefully about what we are trying to say with every picture we make. Let the image do most of the talking.

Ken Scott

