

Newsletter, February 2020



Still-life: an exercise in light, composition and a good subject

The first of the club's theme exhibition nights, on April 1, is the broad-ranging topic of still-life photography. This writer claims no expertise whatsoever in still-life photography; the article simply aims to set out some broad ideas about still-life photography, what it might teach us about our photography more generally and to provide lots of links to websites, social media apps, books and articles that you can peruse for tips, examples and fantastic images to fire the imagination.

Still-life photography is an art form as old as the first camera and its three basic principles mirror those of still-life painting and drawing –



Robert Diamonte: *Pumpkin* (robertdiamante.com)

the use of light, a good composition and an arresting subject or theme, all woven together to produce a captivating, often incredibly simple, image.

Composition, composition, composition

Many of the Old Masters cut their compositional teeth painting still-lives, and the genre is a fantastic way for photographers to acquire confidence and competence in their craft.

Composition can follow classic guidelines, such as the rule of thirds and the golden ratio, but essentially the composition is what you see as best telling the story of your shot.

Looking at others' shots that you admire and respond to, then analysing how the photographer achieved the result they did, is a thorough way to learn techniques.

As one blogger, Danny Eitheim, succinctly puts it: "You'll get much better at seeing how light and shadow affect a photograph [in still-life] – how form comes into play, composition, harmony, and on and on. Texture, balance, and colour interactions play big parts, too. As you get better and better at shooting great still-life subjects, your other photography will improve as well."

His article (click [here](#)) pivots on the dictum that "the whole point of doing still life photography [is] to master composition". The experts say the key to a good still-life shot is keeping the image simple and strong.

Herein, perhaps, lies a big challenge for us Upper Mountains' photographers: making the transition in scale from those big landscapes, even when using a rock or plant or person in the foreground to anchor the image and provide scale and perspective. When we get close up to a few objects arranged in a small setting, things can start to

get tricky. The hours can vanish, while you reposition the objects endlessly to capture the perfect light and shadow, texture, mood, and colour. This is not necessarily a bad thing: think of those too hot summer and too cold winter days when shooting outside is just too unpleasant.

With still-life photography, time is on your side because the object is still and you're usually (but not always) shooting indoors, eliminating the vagaries of the weather: clouds casting unexpected shadows; a sudden breeze moving your object. This means you can take your time to set up the shot as you see it in your mind's eye, and experiment to your heart's content. Slow shutter speeds to capture all that gorgeous detail. Heavenly!



Victoria Ivanova: *Farewell, dear friend!* ([500px.com](#)).

Let in the light, or not!

There are decisions to be made about your light sources. Are you going to just use natural light or are you going to play with artificial light sources? There are a zillion online resources on lighting for still-life; this one [here](#) is a good start for the basics.

The object in still-life

The best advice about what object to photograph is choose one (or several) that speak to you. Classic still-life shots use flowers, vases, fruits and vegetables and so on, but there is nothing in this world that cannot be a fascinating still-life object/subject if composed and lit

with flair and imagination. Nothing. The object's pull on the viewer will exert itself if the emotional engagement with the photographer is in play. Simple. A rusty nail or a sprouting potato can be the most beautiful and meaningful thing you've shot in years.

Learning from the past

If you are interested in delving into the 200-year history of the still-life photograph, the National Science and Media Museum in Bradford, England has a wealth of information about photographic history on its website [here](#), including an excellent essay by art critic Roy Exley titled *Art of Arrangement: still life in the still-life* (click [here](#)).

Browsing for ideas and great shots

A library is a good place to start before you surf! The **Blue Mountains City Council libraries** don't appear to have specific books on still-life photography but there are some texts on still life painting. The basic principles are the same – light, composition and subject/theme – so fine art could inspire some of your shots. For club members who are taking photography courses at

TAFE in 2020, there is a variety of hard copy and online resources in the TAFE system once you have enrolled in your course.

On **Instagram** the hashtag #stilllifephotography takes you to a page with more than one million posts (see you in the next life!) but for those of you who love browsing other people's work for ideas, this is a great resource.

Flickr, the free, online photography sharing platform, is teeming with still-life shots, and still-life groups. Again, there are millions of photographs to browse through. Searching on a still-life tag will narrow the field but it's still vast.

F-Stop Magazine's January/February issue #99 is featuring still-life photography and is expected to be online by February 1 (click [here](#)).

Important dates for the still-life exhibition night

Wednesday, 19 February: the information night talk will be given by an expert on still-life.

Sunday, 29 March, 8pm: deadline for submitting DPIs and digital copies of prints for exhibition night.

Liz Morgan



This image is by local photographer Gary P Hayes who was forced to evacuate when the giant Mt Gosper's fire came within 2km of his Mt Victoria home. In response he has composed *Tears of Fire*, "inspired by a range of emotions around the destruction of natural habitat, animals and homes and lives." Click [here](#) to listen and view.

Members' choice DPI – “Berry Nice”



This bird is a Metallic Starling and they are quite common in Far North Queensland.

I love to photograph these guys because of their manically red googly eyes, and they are not hard to photograph because they are communal nest builders. On a single tree they will build dozens of ball shaped nests to the point where they weigh down the branches.

We found such a tree beside the main highway into Mossman, and many of the nests were at head height or a little above. With birds coming and going all the time with nesting material or food for their young, there was plenty of scope for photographs - I must have taken 50 or 60, and when you take that many it would be disappointing if you didn't get a few good ones.

I took quite a few of birds with these berries in their bills, but this was the only one where the stalk mark on the fruit roughly corresponded with the pupil in the bird's eye. With nature photography there is always that element of luck!

When shooting wildlife I always choose “aperture priority” and then boost the ISO as necessary to get an acceptable shutter speed.

Nikon D500, Nikon 200-500 mm @ 500, *f*7.1, ISO 800.

Geoff Atwood

Members' choice mono – “The Glass Gramophone”

We were travelling the UK in June 2015 and an Irish friend said that a visit to the famous “Waterford Crystal” is a must do. The location suited our itinerary, so off we went. Looking at the website, we thought an hour would suffice.

Four hours later we reluctantly departed. The scale and diversity of the objects was astounding, from the miniature, to the tallest champagne flute in the world and a 3m tall long case clock.

We had heard of “cut glass” but to see it done was amazing. Plain glass is held against a grinding wheel, then cut freehand with no jigs, just a paper outline on the wall. All this is done within a millimetre or less of accuracy.

The factory allowed a close up view of all the steps involved from glass blowing and moulding. If you are in Ireland, then a visit is a must.

Nikon Df, Nikon 24-85mm @ 85mm, *f*5.6, 1/125s, ISO 640.

David Mansfield



Members' choice colour – “The Kimberleys”

This photo was taken near Lake Argyle in the East Kimberleys in Western Australia, about 30 km south-east of Kununurra.

It features Stonewall Creek, a tributary of the Ord River.

It was one of those relatively uncommon moments when a remarkable landscape coincided with a remarkable sky.

Rob Lipscombe



Diary

LAST CHANCE

Head On Portrait, Landscape and Student Awards

Entries close **Sunday 16 February**. Open internationally this competition features \$70,000 in cash and prizes. The finalists will be exhibited in the Head On Photo Festival 2020. To enter, click [here](#).

LensCulture Portrait Awards 2020

The deadline for submitting entries is **Wednesday 19 February**. Note that the time zone isn't specified so it will probably pay to get your entries in a day or two earlier.

Awards for single images are: 1st Place: \$3,000, 2nd Place: \$1,500, and 3rd Place: \$1,000. For a portrait series (5 images): 1st Place: \$5,000, 2nd Place: \$3,000, and 3rd Place: \$1,500.



From the current entries for the LensCulture 2020 Portrait Awards (clockwise from top left): Emily Neville (United States), Lynn Karlin (United States), Simon Blackley (Belgium). You can view all the current entries [here](#).

The awards are open for any style of portrait photography. For further details, click [here](#). You can view the entries already submitted [here](#).

Hounslow 2020

The closing date for entries is **Sunday, 23 February**. The overall

winner receives \$1,000, and there is a first prize of \$500 in each category. Other prizes may also be awarded. Click [here](#) for details.



The TSS Earnslaw on Lake Wakatipu at sunset, captured by Australian Flickr member Colin Bates.

Queenstown full immersion! 7-13 November 2020

This year Adobe Lightroom rival ON1 Software is sponsoring the ON1 Destination Workshop in Queenstown, New Zealand. “This all-inclusive 7-day and 6-night immersion into photography, exploration, and education is an incredible opportunity that you won’t want to miss!”

The workshop focuses on landscape, portrait and excursion photography and will be based out of the beautiful Kamana Lakehouse, with stunning views of Lake Wakatipu.

The fee for the workshop is \$4,495, and if you stay in the Kamana Lakehouse this rises to \$7,450. For further details, click [here](#).

Body en thrall 7 February to 24 April

This exhibition showcases the work of California-born and New York-based Martine Gutierrez as a photographer, model, graphic designer, music producer and creative director.

The *New Yorker*’s Andrea K Scott described this almost impossible to categorise artist as a “Latinx transgender phenom.” *Vice*’s Miss Rosen likens her to Frida Kahlo who once said “I am my own muse. I am the subject I know best.” Read Rosen’s interview with Gutierrez [here](#).

At the Australian Centre for Photography, Project Space Gallery, 21 Foley Street, corner of Crown Street, Darlinghurst,



Martine Gutierrez: *Covertgirl*, 2018, digital photo collage



Agora Awards

Michael Aboya, a 24-year-old Nigerian-born self-taught photographer from Ghana, has won the first prize of \$25,000 in the Agora Awards 2019 for his image *Song of Freedom* (right).

His striking image of boys enjoying music was selected from 50 finalists chosen from the 130,000 entries received from photographers world wide.

Aboya says “I got my first camera in December 2016 and since then I’ve been practicing and learning to become a better visual storyteller and photographer every day.”

He discovered the Agora app in May 2018 through Instagram. “I downloaded it and I was amazed. Within 6 months of being part of the community I won two contests: [#Sound2018](#) and [#Eyes2018](#).

“Joining Agora has helped me beyond words on this journey because it exposed me to amazing photographs from photographers around the world. It’s like a photo

paradise where everyone has been given a space to display their imaginations.

“Aside from this, it’s also a space I learn from. The contest themes, for example, inspire me to go out and create images, the blogs are where I learn from other photographers, and the photos displayed in the Top 50 is another place of huge inspiration to me.”

In ancient Greece the Agora was the chief marketplace of Athens and the centre of that city’s civic life. It also served as a meeting place for popular political assemblies.

The Agora app’s business model draws on this Grecian concept to offer something distinct from the overwhelming amount of unfiltered content on typical social media and image sharing platforms. In some ways the Agora app is a kind of global camera club.

To see the other finalists and for more information about Agora please click [here](#).

Michael Peck



Michael Aboya: *Song of Freedom*

Photography competitions

Photocontests2020.com is a website that pulls together details of, and links to, more than 150 photography competitions for this calendar year.

Entries to some contests are free; others charge a fee. If this is the year you decide to spread your wings, then this is a very good place to start. Click [here](#), now!

2019 Ocean Art Contest Winners

Could it be time for our Upper Blue Mountains photographers to avert their eyes from waterfalls and watercourses and dive beneath their surface instead?

Underwater Photography Guide's 2019 Ocean Art contest attracted entries from 78 countries and offered a very generous \$85,000 in sponsor prizes. All the stunning winning images can be viewed in large size [here](#).



4th place winner Borut Furlan: *Aenome City*.

Camera Obscura

Letting in the light

This new occasional section focuses on photographers from around the world, amateur and professional, whose work has been 'obscured' for one reason or another.

Who knows how many outstanding and important collections are waiting to see the light of day? 'Celebrity' finds like the New York street photographer Vivian Maier, the subject of the hugely successful 2013 documentary *Finding Vivian Maier*, pop up quite regularly, as do less-celebrated finds, some of which have featured in previous newsletters.

We hope club members will share our enthusiasm for unearthing and exploring "obscure camera" users. Your feedback and input is very welcome.

Send your finds, comments and 'found' articles to our club news address: ubmcc.news@gmail.com, using Camera Obscura in the subject field.

A Balkan treasure trove

In January this year, an incredible collection of photographs of rural Moldova were shown to the public for the first time. Some four thousand photographs taken by amateur photographer Zaharia Cușnir in the village of Roșietici, 120 kilometers north of the Moldovan capital, found by chance, reveal daily life during Soviet times.

They were unearthed three years ago by film student Victor Gălușcă from the rubble of an empty house during his project of filming homes that had been abandoned because of mass emigration.

Cușnir's family was disinterested in the collection – his daughter called her father's work "rubbish".

Thankfully the 6 x 6 cm negatives, taken with a Soviet twin lense reflex



Lubitel-2, were painstakingly restored by Gălușcă and his teacher and they are now available for viewing online. Mostly portraits or photographs of community events, Cușnir's images offer a rare, and propaganda-free glimpse of Moldovan village life during the

Soviet era. Absolutely captivating. A good selection of images, some with explanatory captions, is found [here](#) and the official archive can be viewed [here](#) or on [Instagram](#).

Michael Peck & Liz Morgan

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Submitting images



Apple Mail users: after attaching your images please ensure you select

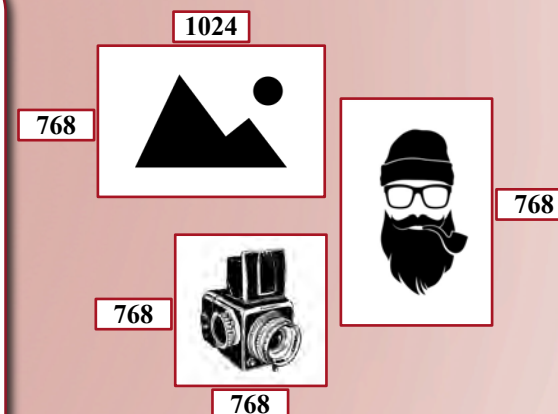
Image Size: Actual Size 

Whether submitting a DPI or digital images of your prints the required format to match the projector is a **maxium width** of 1024 and a **maximum height** of 768 pixels.

For a **landscape** image, set the longest side to 1024 ensuring shortest is no more than 768; for **portrait**, set the longest side to 768, and for a **square** image, all sides are 768.

Please name your image file in the following format: **[type] title_initials.jpg** e.g. [DPI] Womblings_JX.jpg.

The three image types are [DPI], [CP] and [MP]. Use an underscore, not a dash



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