

REFLECTIONS



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE STONY BROOK CAMERA CLUB
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You Have Looked, But Have You Seen? *By Glenn Browning*

First, let me tell you I am guilty of not doing on a regular basis what is contained in the following essay. However, my plan is to correct this fault during the coming year.

Most of the good images that you see in magazines and on people's walls are the result of the photographer knowing the area and knowing the subject. The stories associated with these images most often are the same: the photographer visited the area many times, at different hours, in different weather conditions in order to get the final image. In other words, the photographer knew the area well.

For most of us, we tend to visit areas and try to get good images. We look at an area, work the area, try different angles and may even go to extraordinary lengths (in our own minds) by experimenting with different compositions, perhaps standing on a ladder or lying on our bellies to get the image.

The problem is we have looked at the area we want to photograph, but we haven't seen it. We do not take the time to study the area, to walk around the area without our cameras in an attempt to get to know the area. There are many areas I have been to on numerous occasions, in different weather, times of year and times of day. And, I cannot tell you much about the area that will help either you or me make a great image.

If you are like me, here is an assignment that will help you break the pattern. It is something I will be doing a lot of the next few months. I am not promising you will see the resulting images, but I know it will expand my vision beyond looking. I hope to see very soon.

Unless you recently moved, you are familiar with your "backyard." It may be your actual yard, your neighborhood, someplace you pass on a near daily basis, but I am willing to bet you have only looked, you haven't seen. Now, the assignment. Go to your

"backyard" and go beyond looking – try to see it. What plants, what trees, what architecture is in your "backyard"? How does the morning or afternoon light change their appearance? Are there great shadows on the ground? Does an early or late sun bring out textures on the plants or buildings? Can you find patterns, interesting lines, different views by lying on your belly or lying on your back and looking up?

Now that you are starting to see, keep returning to your "backyard" throughout the year. When you look at your "backyard", make sure you start to see it. Spend some time walking around and changing your perspective to begin to see the things that were always there and previously overlooked.

Once that is done, it is time to take out your camera and use all the lenses and filters you have at your disposal. Set up your tripod at eye level, at waist level and then put it at ground level. Find the dew covered grass and the frost covered leaf. See your flowers as they start to bud early in the morning, see at the fully opened flower with a backlight. Do the same with leaves, especially in the fall, only this time do it with one leaf or just a few leaves. As you walk around your "backyard", look for silhouettes. Catch some motion by freezing or blurring it, once you teach yourself how to see motion.

And, do not be afraid to travel and make a new "backyard" for you to practice seeing. If you travel to the same place often, you can learn to see it just as you learn to see your old "backyard."

In order to get the great image, you must know the area. In order to know an area, you must first see it.

Tomorrow is the time to start seeing. There is no magic bullet here. You and I will have to work to learn to see. Others in our club have already learned to see. You have viewed their images and you know they have learned to see. Each one of these photographers will tell you they know the area and each one will tell you the great image is easy to make. All you have to do is see it first.

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Color Slides	Jessica Jones
B&W Prints	Bob Doyle
Color Prints	Ray Guillette
Digital	Shiv Verma, Tony Mistretta
PSA/NECCC	Dan Charbonnet
Multi-screen	Jim Jones

STONY BROOK CAMERA CLUB

PURPOSE: To promote enjoyment and proficiency in all aspects of photography through education by mutual exchange of knowledge and experience; and, to promote a broad appreciation of our environment.

MEETINGS: Meetings will be held every Thursday of each month; no meetings in July and August. Consult the SBCC Calendar of Events. All meetings start at 7:30 P.M. The regular meeting place is the Wrentham Senior Center, 400 Taunton Street, Wrentham. Mailing address: Stony Brook Camera Club, P.O. Box 20, Wrentham, MA 02093-0020

DUES: Individuals: \$50.00, Families: \$75.00, and \$25.00 for students and members over 65 years of age. To be eligible for competitions, dues must be paid before the first competition.

NEWSLETTER: Published six times during the year for Aug/Sept, Oct/Nov, Dec/Jan, Feb/Mar, Apr/May, and Jun/Jul and solely for the information, guidance and enjoyment of the Stony Brook Camera Club, Wrentham, MA.

OFFICERS: Elected annually and serve as the executive committee with two past presidents. The Stony Brook Camera Club is affiliated with the New England Camera Club Council and is a member of the Photographic Society of America.

Top Ten Questions About Camera Club Competitions

By Andre Bourque

1. Should I enter into club competitions or not?

Should you compete? Yes, definitively YES. Why? A straightforward answer is, 'Why Not?' A more detailed answer, however, requires approaching this potentially contentious subject carefully. It is no secret that not everyone joins a camera club to compete. In fact, a few give competition little to no credibility, and claim it offers little incentive to improve any photographic skills. I disagree. Like it or not, competitiveness in our culture is a fact of life. However, it need not be a Darwinian do-or-die competitive spirit. Rather it should be viewed as a 'celebratory event' of sorts, whereby each competitor participates in a 'friendly jousting' providing for an opportunity to strut one's stuff, proudly share one's accomplishments communally, and to learn new techniques and improve one's photographic skills. One very good reason to participate in club competition ... simply ask yourselves why would anyone deny him or herself experiencing a 'Zing-go-the-strings-of-your-heart' moment after receiving a 15.

2. Do I enter Slides, Digital Projection, and/or Print competitions?

A member may ultimately choose to participate in any one or all the aforementioned categories for competition at SBCC. At the outset, most likely the photographic equipment will probably be the decider. Secondly, one's personality, talent and skills will decide. To those who choose to shoot film and plan on staying the course, welcome. Stony Brook CC continues to provide both time and equipment for film shooters. Unfortunately, it is becoming the norm whereby many camera clubs have summarily decided to 'abandon' film photographers. How long will SBCC continue to support film is anyone's guess. The majority of members seem to have a preference for digital projection competition. There is, however, a strong showing in both Color and Black & White Print competitions. Whichever medium one chooses for competition, let the games begin!

3. Which class and which categories do I compete in?

<http://www.stonybrookcc.com/Competitions/SBCC%20Competitions%20Rules.pdf> The SBCC web site will provide you with all the information you will need. New members normally start off in Class B. There are several categories to choose from: Open, Nature, Creative, and Prints. Let me add and 'advise' it probably is best to first enter in Open to get one's feet wet. If, however, one has a preference for Nature, than by all means, jump right in. Warning: *Stony Brook Camera Club* is traditionally renowned for its nature photographers. In fact I daresay it is the core category. So, if Nature, specifically *Wildlife*, is your cup of tea, be prepared for some tough competition. The **Open** category is just that: **Open**. Warning here as well: New members should not be overly offended when you enter photos of children, pets, point-and-shoot,

everyday photos, etc that may and usually score in the low numbers. Not that these subjects are unacceptable. In time members find out quickly enough that such images usually lack 'The WOW' factor – IMPACT at first sight. Photos of this ilk make good record shots for family albums, but normally fare poorly as competition entries. The **Creative** category translates into letting YOUR creative juices show no boundaries – so long as the final product started out as an original photo taken by you. Take the opportunity to Photoshop it to death. But, be forewarned, it can go beyond 'creative' and lapse into a frenzied mess. Lastly, I encourage you to enter print competition in either Color or Black & White category - nature, open, and creative elements apply in both category.

4. If I choose to enter *print competitions*, how best to present them for judging? Print media is different from digitally projected images in that it is a reflective art medium that will most likely be perceived differently from a judge's perspective. For print competitions consider using papers that accentuate hues, enrich color saturations, control brightness and contrast for added depth. A favorable competitive edge is attained for color prints having images on either glossy or luster papers. If you choose to print your own, familiarize yourself with your printer's profiles for each paper you use. For Black & White consider the advantages of printing on Matted papers. It is advantageous, though not always a guarantee for success, to use matt texture papers with black matted inks (MK) as opposed to photo black inks (PK) for an added impact with a dynamic range of whites to blacks that will pop off the print. Commercially printed entries are accepted. However, keep in mind that when you do so you forfeit control of the final outcome. My personal bias would be to have ALL prints entered in competition printed by the maker ONLY. I believe the printing process and the skills it involves is a large part of the story. A sized print (11x14 Max) when matted (16x20 - maximum size for competition) will most likely sway a judge's score favorably. Mind you, nevertheless, there are smaller images that do manage to outperform and stand out.

5. If I choose to enter digitally projected image and/or slide competition, how do I go about doing it?

<http://www.stonybrookcc.com/Competitions/DigitalImageNaming2.htm> Read all of the instructions prior to sending it out via e-mail to

images@stonybrookcc.com. If competing with slides, all you need to do is bring in your images on competition night.

6. Why is it my images' colors/contrast/tonality when projected at SBCC appear differently when viewed on my monitor at home?

This is the \$64,000 question that continues to come up often. I think it will continue to haunt us, up to and until man and machine find a perfect coexistence of sorts. Nowadays, though, the simplest and most direct and effective answer how best to fix this problem is to first ensure your home computer's monitor has been calibrated, calibrated, and calibrated. Color management is a highly complex subject not easily explained. There are tomes and ample web sites covering this subject. To reiterate, calibrate your home monitor – and schedule repeated calibration on a regular basis. Briefly, calibration of monitors and projectors may be performed in two ways: One is to eyeball it. That is, visually calibrate while using computer software when following step-by-step instructions. A more accurate application is to calibrate using an external measuring device. One such device is the Spider PRO that is presently available via SBCC. When the club's projector has also been calibrated correctly, it all falls into place and everyone is happy. I daresay that this is not always the case for one reason or another. There is not enough space here to discuss the pros and cons on this subject. Ideally, it would be best to have all images viewed and judged via a monitor. Since this is not the case, calibrate!

7. What makes a 'winning' image for competition?

Choosing THE image that will most likely do well in competition is an evolutionary process. For a new member it normally begins with a trial-and-error approach. Of course, there is a lot to be said about having a 'beginner's luck'. All the same, when beginner's luck runs out, there will be dry periods, and it will seem that one will never move up from class B. When this happens one risks assessing ways to shoot images that will satisfy judges' tastes. This can be restated as 'Playing the Judges' - NOT a good idea. Chances are this will backfire. Judges can be and are an unpredictable lot. When photographic skills do evolve, and they will with practice, practice, and more practice, a competitor in due course realizes how to 'create' an image, and not just 'take' a photo. Sort of finding one's groove and personal winning photographic style. However, when not taking this approach, one

risks settling on images that have a formulaic look and feel. For sure there are academic and aesthetic 'guidelines' that are useful for composing and designing a winning image. And, without a doubt, judges do resort to using such 'guidelines' for scoring. Discovering what are those 'guidelines' and to persistently – no, rather obsessively challenge them, I personally guarantee the 15's will come. If not a 15, you will still have images you can proudly display. Nevertheless, I urge you to first learn the basics and then move on.

8. What are the criteria used by judges when scoring images for competition?

What do judges generally look for when judging? What are the 'guidelines' generally applied when judging? Definitely, judges have personal preferences when determining what is and what is not a winner. Even so, there are fundamentals of composition, cropping, exposure, sharpness and properly focused images, rules of thirds to name a few. They are the core criteria that will deem which images will receive higher scores from others' in a competition. In my experiences when judging, I can vouch for one key ingredient that is a major predictor in determining a winner. It is what is dubbed the 'WOW' factor – Images that have an immediate 'Impact' when first viewed. There are equally important and subtle judging criteria: Does the image evoke or provoke a mood? Is there a striking viewpoint and does it communicate a narrative that brings all elements of the image together? Innovation and creativity generally add to the overall score. As for prints, judges will also critique your choice of mat. Make sure they are clean and personable. Is it possible judges are wrong? Definitely Yes. The act of judging is not a science. Rather, it is an art. Judges who provide ample constructive critiques and generously give hints and tips on how to improve an image are ones you want to re-invite.

9. There are judges bestow positive comments for an image, but score it low. Why?

On occasions there are indeed judges who will for one reason or another choose to generously provide positive feedback and in spite of that provide low to average scores to an image. Infrequently there are those who provide little to no feedback when asked to do so. Nevertheless, when judges do give feedback it is hoped that it will be the type that will give the maker of an image a better understanding of how hers or his image fared when put side by side to others'. As I pointed out earlier, "to learn new techniques and improve one's

photographic skills" is a crucial aspect when participating in competition. I can attest to the fact that in all my years as a camera club member I have improved my photographic skills largely due to having competed and listened to judge's comments on how to improve an image. Conversely, there are judges who go overboard with their points of view. By that I mean comments that reflect more the judge's personal tastes that do not really add any useful 'academic impact'. So why are there judges who purposefully provide minimal to no constructive critiques? For some there may be a reluctance to give negative comments and avoid offending competitors? Some judges may want to only reflect on the positive – that is, focus on the positive reinforcement aspect? Also, personality factors may play into how a judge will comment or not? Fortunately, we have had judges who do provide great feedback – this is a plus.

10. At image study night I got great feedback from the members, but when I entered my image in competition it did poorly score-wise. Why is that?

Before answering this one, let's first look at the possibility of the opposite occurring. What if on image study night the feedback from other members had been negative but the decision to show it for competition resulted in a great score? The man, Yogi Berra, once said, "It ain't over till it's over". Straightforward, isn't it? As I stated before, judges are a fickle lot ... and so are we. Yogi is also quoted to have said, "In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is". So, leaving you with these parting and perhaps ambiguous quotes, keep in mind that when you decide to compete in club competitions, anything is possible. For some competition is an intense and passionate event, for others it is merely another club activity whereby the relationship between good or bad photography is meaningless if we know nothing beyond the images we see. Image study night avails us the ability to view, study, discuss, and critique images. It is only a first step towards learning how to improve one's photographic skills. It is not meant to provide us with a definitive answer as to how an image will fare in competition or not. Practice, practice, and more practice will get you there!

Meeting Minutes...by our members

April 2, 2009– Competition

Mike Roman judged our competition consisting of A & B Digital General, Digital Creative, A&B Slide General, and Slide Creative.

April 9, 2009 – Multiscreen Selection

SBCC members presented multiple images and slides and competed amongst the club members for one image in each category to be chosen and later submitted to the multiscreen and the quad competitions.

April 16, 2009 – Voice of the Photographer

Several members brought in images and prints that had particular importance to them as a photographer and they were willing to share their thoughts and feelings with the club members.

April 23, 2009 – Image Study Night

Ray Guillette hosted our seventh image study night.

April 30, 2009– Ken Coop

At our April 30th meeting, we were treated to a presentation by renowned nature photographer Ron Rosenstock, who has been creating images for over 40 years. Ron has a long list of accomplishments. His work can be found in many permanent collections and his work has been published in numerous magazines. He has

authored many books, and has had many solo exhibits. He has been operating an international photo tour business since 1976. Ron gave an inspiring talk during which he shared some bits of wisdom such as "the technique is finite, the vision is infinite" and "don't be seduced by the subject matter" meaning find what it is that is compelling in what you see.

Ron showed us a number of stunning images ranging from his earlier work with large format view cameras to his eventual migration to digital techniques several years ago to the present. Many of the images were taken in his exciting tour locations, which are concentrated in Ireland and Italy, but also include such exotic places as Morocco, New Zealand and Iceland.

Ron's message, delivered by both words and images, gave Stony Brook members a special evening that will be remembered for some time to come. Ron Rosenstock article by Ken Coop

May 6, 2009 – 4th Annual Digital Multiscreen competition.

This competition was held at the Merrimack Valley Camera Club. Details to follow in next newsletter.

May 7, 2009 - Competition

Jake Moser judged our competition consisting of A&B Digital Nature, A&B Slide Nature, and B&W Prints.

2008-2009 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

5/14/09	Taylor Yeager	Nature Photography
5/21/09	All SBCC Members	Annual Business Meeting/Image of the Year
5/28/09	All SBCC Members	Image Study Night (moderator Ray Guillette)
6/04/09	TBA	Lighting Tutorial
6/11/09		Lighting Workshop (aka members tailgate party)
6/18/09	All SBCC Members	Awards Dinner and Members' Show

MULTISCREEN 2009-2010

All competition photographs must be taken May 1, 2009, or later.

Digital

Slides



STONY BROOK CAMERA CLUB "REFLECTIONS"

A PSA Award-Winning Newsletter

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