



January 2019 Presidents' Letter

Dear Members.

Our club is in great shape. We're starting the year with more members than ever. We have money in the bank and a fantastic group of dedicated volunteers.

However, our success has presented us with a problem. We have more entries in our projected competitions during some months than we can manage – and more than many of our best judges are willing to work with.

Additionally, our last two projected evenings didn't end until 10:00pm, which is not only past many of our bedtimes, but more importantly, endangers our continued use of Drakes Landing.

As you'll see, this isn't a new problem and there is no perfect solution.

There is tension between the competitive aspects of the evening – wanting to win – and wanting to grow as photographers through receiving and hearing good critiques. This isn't an either/or issue, but a striving for a decent balance between competition and education.

Long-time members may recall that by 2010, the projected side of the club had grown to where we were averaging over 125 images per night and members were rightfully complaining that the evenings were going too long. In the first effort to shorten the evening, the number of permitted entries per member was reduced from three to two per night. That reduced the overall number of images in an evening to just below 100. Evenings were shorter, but members missed being able to submit the third image. After two years, we tried going back to three images a night.

In 2015 as the numbers of entries took off again, we took advantage of our technology by instituting the 45-second clock and eliminating the 3-second preview of images before the judge began the critique. But the number of images continued to rise, to 130-143 images per night, peaking some months in the 150's and 160's.

January 2019

Our judges weren't happy with the pressure of the clock and the critiques were by definition, shorter. By the time people had a chance to look at the image and read the title, the judge effectively was down to 30 seconds or so to comment. A few judges made the most of being efficient; many weren't as successful.

A year ago, we asked our judges to at least preview the images before our competitions. Some did; some refused either directly or by inaction. And most recently, we asked our judges to pre-score the images. None would. Frankly, we're asking a lot of people who travel to come here and who are doing this to be helpful and not for the relatively few dollars we pay.

As a club we will need to make some decisions about how to proceed.

While there may be technological or procedural ways to speed up our evenings, we've recently learned that some judges – some of our best judges – have refused to judge our projected competitions. The 45-second clock is one reason; an equally important reason is that they simply don't want to judge so many images in an evening. It's too much pressure and the gratification they get from teaching through the critiques is all-but-eliminated.

Over the next couple of months, the Board will be engaged in determining the best path to take. We ask that you think about that balance between competition and critiques and, as a step toward soliciting your feedback around that balance and about the possible choices we can make, we've set up a Message Board Topic under General MPC Message Board. We encourage you to participate in this very important discussion.

-Steve

Editor's Note

Welcome readers to the January issue of Focal Plane News. The year is off to a good start with excellent attendance/participation at Club competitions and SIGs, as well as at meetings of the Golden Gate Computer Society (GGCS).

Coming up there is a MPC Field Trip to Capay Valley (page 8), the Jan/Feb Photo Challenge (Page 8), the Street SIG Challenge and the Street Photography exhibition in San Rafael (Page 7). Get involved!

It is also time to **take action** on submitting your prints and projected images for the MPC 2018 Annual Competition. Winners will be showcased at our annual club awards banquet on March 24th, details of which will be available shortly.

Finally we have a Travel article written by one of our members on her adventures in Bhutan. Enjoy.

Noel Isaac
Editor

"Images of the Month - January"



Sea Cliffs (macro of rust on an old truck)

Mary Scheft

Projected Image Creative - Masters

Judge: Brenda Tharp

Behind the Image: Sea Cliffs is part of my Erosion series of macro photographs that I've been working on for a few years. I often discover "landscapes" in decayed surfaces. They were formed through erosion and time, just like real landscapes, and need optimal light in the same way, to draw out surface textures. Sometimes I revisit a subject many times (if it hasn't driven or floated off, or decayed beyond use!). None of these photographs were produced using filters, textures, apps or other similar techniques--they are all traditional macro photographs in that sense. Some of the images are basically straight shots; in others, I composite elements from another area of the same or similar subject.

When I stumbled across this particular truck, I saw that it had great potential from its color and sorry state. I noticed one interesting area of rust along a wheel arch, and the words "sea cliff" popped into my head, along with a mental picture similar to the final image. The "cliff" part is a straight shot. The "water" was moved from the top to the bottom. The "sky" was composited from an area a few feet down the truck, as the blue color and white "clouds" there seemed stronger than the whiter "sky" originally next to the cliffs. The photograph was taken hand-held with my Sony a7riii, 105mm Nikon macro lens with Metabones adapter, at f/16 for 1/250 sec, ISO 400. The image was first processed in Lightroom, and then in Photoshop for compositing and curves.

[.....Mary Scheft](#)



LINES Ballet: Dancing in the Dark

Steve Disenhof

**Print - Monochrome Pictorial -
Advanced**

Judge: Dan Heller

Behind the Image: Gregory Dawson is a choreographer who stages much of his work on dark stages. While this creates a sense of moodiness in the dance, it's usually terrible for us photographers. This image was shot at an afternoon dress rehearsal and the window light silhouetting the dancers really makes the image. However, the performance was that evening, so I'm not sure the audience could see anything at all!

This image was captured with my Sony a7Riii at ISO 6400, 1/160, f2 and with a 28mm prime lens. Some of you may recall that Doug entered an almost identical image last year, since we were standing about two feet from each other working for the dance company. The images are so similar that when I saw his come up in competition, my initial reaction was "Wait, what? Did I put that in???" Interestingly, he and I processed our images almost identically without talking to each other - B&W, heavy noise reduction, etc. - because with the high ISO and silhouetting, this was really the only way to get a good outcome.

[.....Steve Disenhof](#)

MPC Event Calendar

- **Monday, February 4th: Projected Competition.**
6:30pm @ Drakes Landing Community Room
- **Monday, February 11th - Education Night**
6:30pm @ Town Center, Corte Madera.
- **Monday, February 18th - Print Competition.**
6:30pm @ Drakes Landing Community Room
- **Thursday, February 14th: MPC Board Meeting****
11:00am @ GGCS Meeting Room, First Presbyterian Church +
1505 Mission Ave. San Rafael.
- **Thursday February 28th: Street SIG Meeting:**
6:30pm @ GGCS Meeting Room, First Presbyterian Church +
1505 Mission Ave. San Rafael.

Editor's Note:

**Any member of MPC can attend the monthly Board Meetings. If you have any questions or subjects that you would like it to discuss, please put them into writing and send an e-mail to one of the two Presidents.

Monthly minutes of the MPC Board are posted shortly after being approved at the following month's Board meeting. Copies can be found in the Club and Committee Information section of the website <http://tinyurl.com/ya9kkbb6> here: "Board Info>Board Minutes>2018 Board Minutes"

New Members to the MPC

Please join us in welcoming the following new Members to the Club:

Competing Members:

Bette Hollis
Janis Moorhouse
Valentine Morozoff



Do introduce yourselves to new members at upcoming MPC events and competition nights.

The MPC "Street SIG"

The next meeting of the MPC Street SIG is at 6:30pm on Thursday, February 28. The theme is "Dark and/or Wet Streets". The details, including upload info, are here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A7U84jUw0oEvZ6UBpY8tHo8JYZHCHXPYyYGVHxHImDQw/edit?usp=sharing>

Full details and an introduction to MPC's Street SIG can also be found through the following link:

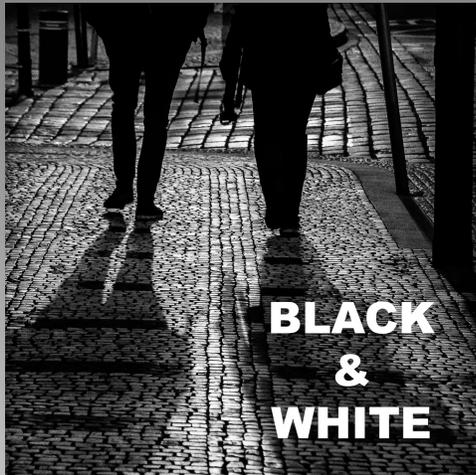
(<https://goo.gl/kpofqr>)

[Doug Kaye & Steve Disenhof](#)

2019 Dominican Street Photo Show

The MPC Street Photography SIG will be presenting an exhibition of Street Photography in the ground-floor lobby of the Joseph R. Fink Science Center on the Dominican College campus in San Rafael. Although the show will be starting February 14 and run through September, the official opening will be March 6 at a reception there at 6:30pm.

See <https://goo.gl/rA9nz2> for info about our meetings.



2019 January/February MPC Photo Challenge - "Black& White"

So, our challenge for January/February is to create a dynamic BLACK AND WHITE image!

Get there any way you like - take an image in gray tones, or convert it after the fact. Just be sure that your submission is all white, black and gray!ken

Here are the details:

Your photograph must be taken between the dates of January 8 and February 28, 2019. As you upload and caption your image, let us know WHEN and WHERE you took the picture and why you think it works better as a black and white image instead of color

DO NOT upload an old, archived image please. Photographs for this challenge must be taken between January 8 and February 28, 2019.

PRIZES!!

.....[Harvey Abernathy](#)

MPC Field Trip: February 23.

"Capay Valley Road Trip"

- February 23rd, Saturday
- 9am Breakfast at Road Trip Cafe in Capay
- Almond blossoms in orchards
- Mustard Fields
- Old equipment and beautiful spring landscapes

For further information contact [Harvey Abernathy @ harveya@ndphotos.com](#)
(415-385-0054)

The Outside Photography World

EXHIBITS in the Bay Area:

- [Brassai Exhibition @ SF MOMA](#)
- [This Land@ Pier 24](#)
- [Current Exhibitions.](#) @ the Harvey Milk Photo Center.
- [Current Exhibitions](#) @ SF Camerawork
- [Current Exhibitions](#) @ Cantor Arts Center

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS:

- [Harvey Milk Photo Center](#)
- [Point Reyes National Seashore Association](#)
- [The Image Flow](#)
- [Photo Arts Marin](#)

NOTE:

Do you know another location with great classes and/or workshops?

Please send the information to: focalplanenewsletter@gmail.com

MPC Member Websites

Want to see more photos of our members, please visit their websites, the list is [here](#):

<https://focalplanenewsletter.wordpress.com/member-websites/>

If you want to add your website to the list, please send a request to focalplanenewsletter@gmail.com

Bhutan by Pamela Plumer



Bhutan, a Buddhist kingdom on the Himalaya's eastern edge, is known for its monasteries, fortresses (or dzongs) and dramatic landscapes that range from subtropical plains to steep mountains and valleys. Bhutan is also the land that famously measures Gross National Happiness over Gross Domestic Product and a place that has remained blissfully untouched by the rest of the world

In October 2017 I spent two weeks trekking in Bhutan. While the uniqueness of the Bhutanese culture, the stunning scale of the Himalayas, and the lack of westerners and tourists are what enticed me, the beauty and spirituality of the landscape and people will stay with me forever.

Tucked in the Himalayas between India and China, the Kingdom of Bhutan is both remote and a bit more complicated to visit.

To get there, one must fly to Paro Airport, one of the world's most dangerous airports. It is surrounded by towering 18,000' peaks and the plane is rocked by winds that whip through the steep valley. To not dwell on the precarious landing, vie for a seat on the left side of the plane. Weather permitting, there are spectacular views of the eastern Himalaya, including Cho Oyu, Everest, Lhotse, Makalu, and Kanchenjunga - five of the highest peaks in the world!

Cultural tours of the spectacular dzong monasteries, temples and festivals is what 90% of visitors book. For trekkers though, unlike trekking regions in Nepal, Bhutan has no infrastructure to support independent travelers so you must travel with a support team. All supplies are carried by mules so we were fortunate to only carry our day packs.



The first couple days were spent exploring Paro then Thimpu, the capital. We visited the local museums and dzongs. We also visited the School of Arts and Crafts (or "painting school"), where Bhutanese children follow a six-year program in traditional arts, such as drawing, painting, woodcarving, and sculpture. We were graciously invited to a special dinner at the home of the owners of the trekking company. Following a generous (and spicy!) dinner of local Bhutanese food we were dressed up in traditional Bhutanese costume. The men wear a Gho, a knee-length robe tied at the waist, and women a Kira, an ankle-length sari-like garment accompanied by a light jacket known as a Tego. [.....read more](#)