



April/May 2019 President's Letter

Dear Members.

I guess it was much simpler in the days of film. An image was captured on a fixed medium and, if not a slide, processing was mostly limited to dodging, burning and cropping.

These days, the influence of "digital darkroom" tools such as Photoshop, Nik, Topaz and others have introduced a host of questions for Photography competitions.

What is a photograph? What can a photographer add or subtract from the original capture? What can one add in post-processing and what is considered the artist's "own work."

With additional guidance from N4C, the board has spent the past few months researching and discussing these questions and has arrived at the following policy statement.

MPC generally follows the guidelines set by N4C. The starting point for this is the following excerpt from N4C I competition definitions:

"By virtue of submitting an entry, the photographer certifies the work is his/her own. No clip art, digital art or photographs other than those made by the entrant may be used in whole or in any portion of the image. When graphic elements other than photographs created by the entrant are used in an image, photographic content must still predominate."

Several policy statements by N4C offer further guidance to this and our board has used these to provide the following clarifications for our members:

- In the Nature, Travel and Journalism categories, there is no change to the existing definitions.
 - The maker can crop, utilize various dodge and burn tools, remove dust spots, and make an image monochrome.
 - Cloning, removal of objects, and other manipulations are not allowed. The maker can add a border to the image, but members are strongly encouraged to keep these simple. "Fancy borders" in these three categories are likely to be disqualified by the judge.

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- Specifically for the creative categories (Color and Mono Pictorial or Creative), everything in an image also must have been created by the maker, but composite images are allowed. Paraphrasing N4C's policy:

The final image may consist of one or more photographic elements. An area of confusion is the use of non-photographic elements in a composite image. Examples of non-photographic elements are digital drawings, scanned drawings, graphic elements and text; in short, any element that is not "photographic." These are allowed provided the entrant created them, however these non-photographic elements must be a minor element of the image.

- For instance, you can replace a sky with an image of a sky that you captured in another image. But you can't replace a sky with an image of a sky made by someone else (e.g. Landscape Pro, etc)
- Similarly, you can add/merge other elements from another image, as long as you captured that image
- You can add text or drawing elements that you created in Photoshop, or scanned drawings you made, as long as they are a minor element in the image
- You can use a filter in Photoshop, NIK and TOPAZ to improve the photograph, BUT the filter must simply be moving around pixels already present in your image, not adding new ones created by someone else.
 - For example, programs such as Topaz Impression or Glow or Nik may move around and/or change the hue, saturation or brightness of your pixels, but do not add new pixels. That IS allowed.
 - However, a program like Topaz Texture Effects that adds a texture created by a software engineer would not be allowed (e.g. new pixels). However, you are free to add textures that you have created. A texture that you have photographed is OK to add.
- Borders
 - As noted above, in the Nature, Travel and Journalism categories, you may create or add a border, but be cautioned that due to the definitions of those categories, anything other than a simple border may be disqualified by the judge.
 - In Color and Mono Pictorial and Creative categories, MPC will now allow borders created both by the maker or by a program (e.g. Nik), again as long as it does not predominate over the photographic image. Note that some N4C judges may disqualify "fancy borders" in such images at N4C competitions. This is subjective and N4C is allowing this to be at the discretion of the judge.

Steve

Editor's Note

Welcome to this double April/May issue of Focal Plane News.

In addition to further details about the winners of the Club's monthly competitions, one of our members, Steve Ziman, won the Grand Prize in *Digital Photo's* Annual Black & White Contest (Page 12)...well done Steve. 👍👍

Coming up there is a Photography Outing: to "Jack London State Park and Quarryhill Botanical Garden", and the May/June Photo Challenge (Page 10). Also, check out the Street SIG Challenge and the Street Photography exhibition in San Rafael (Page 9).

A travel article by Leslie Baker about Umbria, Italy is on Page 13, and Marnie Walters has summarized the talk given by Stuart Schwartz at April's Education Night (Page 14).

Get involved!

Noel Isaac
Editor

"Images of the Month - April"



Street artist close to finishing her work at the Italian Street Fair, San Rafael, CA

Gene Morita

Projected Images Pictoral - Masters

Judges: TJ Campbell & Merrill Mack

Behind the Image:

What I liked about the scene was the circle with the street painter off center and the supporting circles in the corners. I watched it developed over the two days and on the last day, when the street painter nearing completion I got a ladder and took a wide-angle shot to encompass the scene. The entire scene was in the shade so no harsh shadows. I knew what I wanted to do but had to be sure I could get all of the elements in on the final processing. I thought, but only for a moment, maybe I could really shoot straight down but that was too dangerous for me as well as the painter. Planning on what I wanted was the key in getting the final processed image.

Corrected for color and white balance. Used the Transform tool by lining up the oblique angles. That corrected the picture into a square and the resulting circle. Cropped the image. Sony mirrorless camera. F 11, 1/200, iso 400, 10 mm on a full frame

....[Gene Morita](#)



The Artist as Barber: Medellin trains artists as barbers so they can earn a living and hear local stories as material for their art. Here, a student decorates his space before the opening.

Dorothy Weaver

Print Special Journalism - Basic

Judge: John Goyer

Behind the Image:

The image was taken on a trip to Medellin, Colombia. We were on a 4 hour visit to one of the barrios that was settled by escapees from the countryside violence during the drug wars. A community organization which promotes the native arts of the residents was our guide. Image was taken in a soon-to-open barber shop where the artists will, after training, work as barbers, collect stories from residents, and then memorialize the stories in their art. This painter was decorating his space. He did not want his face photographed, but was fine with our shooting him from the back. The scene was touching to me on many levels.

Taken with my Sony A7RIII, Sony 24-105 lens at 40 mm. F10, 1/400.

[....Dorothy Weaver](#)

"Images of the Month - May"



Female Snowy Owl- During the Winter months when the food is scarce, the female is so territorial that it would even attack and eat its' male partner if he crosses her territory.

Monsoor Assadi

Projected Nature - Masters

Judqe: Dan Heller

Behind the Image:

"As the Winter Sets in, The Snowy Owl migrates from its habitat of the Canadian Tundra to the Southern parts of Canada and Northern United States in search of food.

On this migration, the males and females are not together, and in fact, they become each other's nemesis as they stay solitary during these months.

I went to the frozen corn and wheat fields close to Ottawa, Canada in late January in search of both the male and the female owls. They search for food during the day, and stay in grain silos at night.

This image was shot one early misty cloudy morning before sunrise. I used a Sony a9 with a 100-400mm f5.6 lens. The shutter speed was 3200, f5.6, focal length 342, and the ISO was 16000."

[.....Monsoor Assadi](#)



Heavenly Magnolias

Frances Williams

Print Special Creative - Basic

Judge: Oliver Klink



Behind the Image: This image (left) was my before image. The first thing I did was push the sliders all the way to the right to make it a very high key image - more so than the above, after 1st making a copy of it. I then went into Photoshop and added multiple layers. Different colored backgrounds at different opacities and blending modes. I desaturated the image and continued to add color (mostly earthy yellows and browns) at low opacities. Difference was one of the blending modes I used that gave some texture and a blue color, which I then just changed the hue and masked out the flower and leaves. I had to save the image multiple times because my files tend to get too large. (I save a TIFF file, then flatten and continue working) and I also saved multiple variations, some with barely no color, so I could hand paint at some point, and others with varying degrees of color and

backgrounds. I cloned out a branch and some distracting things and used the eye dropper to paint in some of the greens and pinks at very low opacity in the flowers and leaves. I tend to work on an image then come back to it after a period of weeks or longer to see if I want to make changes. I used a Sony A7R3, f5.6 s.125 ISO 200, Sony 70-300, 165mm. I shot looking up in the trees with the sky totally blown out. I was shooting purposefully to have a white background that I could later adjust and add my own colors. I spent an afternoon in the botanical garden shooting up into the magnolia trees and have multiple images and variations in order to develop them in this manner. This was one of my favorites. I find it is good to do a series at different angles and view points since it is hard to tell which one will work the best until you start developing them.

[.....Frances Williams](#)

MPC Event Calendar

- **Monday, June 3rd: Projected Competition.**
6:30pm @ Drakes Landing Community Room
- **Monday, June 10th - Education Night**
6:30pm @ Town Center, Corte Madera.
- **Monday, June 17th - Print Competition.**
6:30pm @ Drakes Landing Community Room
- **Thursday, June 13th: MPC Board Meeting****
11:00am @ GGCS Meeting Room, First Presbyterian Church +
1505 Mission Ave. San Rafael.
- **Thursday June 27th: 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:

Rodrigo Moreira
John Woodsworth

Associate Member:

Jon Dahl



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, June 27. The theme is "Negative Space". For details, including upload info, go to the following link:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A7U84jUw0evZ6UBpY8tHo8JYZHCHXPyYGVHxHImDQw/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 is 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. This show runs through September.

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



2019 May - June MPC Photo Challenge - "Shoes"

What does that word bring to mind for you? Your favorite slippers? Comfy sneakers? Hiking boots? Colorful summer sandals? Stilettos with pizzazz???

For this next challenge, you get to show us a photo of fabulous "limousines for the feet"!

They can be your shoes or someone else's. They can be on feet or not. They can be in blazing color or dramatic black and white, new or used. You are in total charge. Here are the details:

Your photograph must be taken between the dates of May 13 and June 30, 2019. As you upload and caption your image, let us know WHEN and WHERE you took the picture and why you selected it as your shoe image.

DO NOT upload an old, archived image please. Photographs for this challenge must be taken between May 13 and June 30, 2019.

Presented by [Nancy Barasch](#), MPC Meetup Challenge Committee Member.

MPC Photography Outing: Tuesday, June 25 - "Jack London State Park and Quarryhill Botanical Garden"

This excursion starts at 9 am at [Jack London State Park](#) in Glen Ellen. What was once Jack London's dream house is now an extensive ruin that has been described as a "burned out Ahwanhee Hotel". At 10:30 am we will be joined by a Park docent who will speak about the Wolf House and Jack London's life.

After Jack London SP, we'll stop for lunch (TBD). The afternoon continues at Quarryhill Garden a few miles from Glen Ellen, north on Highway 12. Quarryhill Garden is one of the most botanically diverse spots in Sonoma and a place of varying beauty throughout the seasons. The Quarryhill Garden website (<http://www.quarryhillbg.org/>) is loaded with information and maps as well as an "In the Garden" page that shows what's blooming by season.

Come join us,

The Outside Photography World

EXHIBITS in the Bay Area:

- [Louis Stettner 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

A Winning Image

Congratulations to Club Member Steve Ziman, whose image "Young Monks in Pagoda in Bagan, Myanmar" won the Grand Prize in *Digital Photo's* Black & White 2018 Annual Photo Contest.



Steve's comments:

Bagan is an ancient city on the Ayeyarwady River and has about 2000 temples and is a photographer's delight. I worked with a local photographer to shoot these novice monks in an interesting setting. I was looking for something that provided natural lighting, and a stage in which these monks could stand. The pagoda met both of these requirements as the narrow windows provided enough illumination to show the aged interior to light up the smoke from the incense and candles.

Canon EOS T3i, 18-85 mm f/3.5-5.6; shot at 1/20 sec. f/5.6 ISO 1600

Umbria - Leslie Baker

The impetus for my first trip to Italy in 1994 was the movie "Enchanted April" depicting a group of British women who rent a villa for a holiday in Tuscany. I put together a group of friends and we did just that. It was magical. Since then, my husband and I have managed to go almost every year.



We have been all over the country from the Alps in the north to Puglia in the boot. One of the few places we have not been is Sicily and that's on the calendar for next year. Through the years we have both rented villas with friends and traveled solo – usually driving, but sometimes by train.

For the past 15 years or so, we have established a 'home base' in Umbria. For those not familiar, Umbria is the region south of Tuscany and north of Lazio (where Rome is located). We stay in a small town, Tordibetto, in the countryside, at an agriturismo called La Fornace. We're 5 minutes from the amazing town of Assisi and 20 minutes from the capital of the region, Perugia. La Fornace consists of two buildings each of which have a number of apartments of different configurations. There are two

regular 'hotel' rooms, but all the others have full kitchens and are great for extended stays. Their vineyard adjoins the property and they have an olive grove that produces delicious oil. If you are interested you can check out their website at <http://www.lafornace.com>



Compared to Tuscany, Umbria is relatively untouristed. Even though Assisi gets a lot of visitors, it is lovely. We make a point, at least once in each trip, to tour all three levels of the Basilica. Security is

much more visible than it once was. We found on our last trip in 2017, that visitors must now enter via the Romanesque and beautiful Middle Church. [...read more.](#)

“Establishing One’s Goals in Photography”

Presenter: Stuart Schwartz

Education Night Summary - April 8, 2019

By Marnie Walters



On Monday, April 8th, our Club had the pleasure of hosting Stuart Schwartz as our guest speaker for Education Night at the Town Center Community Room. Stuart is the owner and one of the many instructors at The Image Flow in Mill Valley. Per the company’s Mission Statement, “The Image Flow aims to celebrate photography in all its forms and to provide a platform for photographers of all levels to create work, exchange ideas, and to innovate the medium of photography . . . providing public exhibitions, free lectures, workshops, rentals, and imaging services.” The following is my takeaway from some of the high points of his presentation.

Stuart spoke to the crowd about how to establish and focus on one’s goals to move forward in photography. He spoke about The Photo Challenge Workshop at The Image Flow and how to use its formula as a tool, for taking a theme or subject to build a serious body of work. In choosing the theme, it is important to take incremental steps to move forward. The first, most important thing, is to decide what your goals are and what it is you are trying to achieve. One suggestion was to take a piece of paper and write down those ideas to go back to, and reflect on from time to time.

For example, if you are a street photographer, pick up books on the subject, read and look at street photography images, then go out and shoot “non-stop”. It is important not to get discouraged in the beginning if one does not feel they are progressing. Becoming good at anything takes time. Hopefully you can connect with someone, especially in the beginning, who can mentor you in street photography. (Preferably one person, and not multiple people, because multiple people can add to the confusion!) It is important to pick someone whose taste, approach and knowledge of photography you trust. Work with the mentor regularly, taking their advice to guide you along the way. Assign yourself a project once/week, at a minimum, get out and shoot on your project, then work on it. Do your post-processing, editing, deleting, curating your work, and then have your mentor also help curate your work. Focus on your knowledge of light, composition, and how to edit your collection down to the best images (although Stuart says he doesn’t permanently delete anything, as sooner or later, you may want to revisit those images). [.....read more.](#)