Photography Group News

The photography group and their pursuits aren't a particularly easy or novel bunch of coves about which to entertain the masses with news bulletins. At this point, you have to believe, I am anxiously awaiting to see what I'm about to write, no doubt it will be absolute rhubarb!

The group identity and raison d'être are adequately defined in the Photographic section of the web site, this detail will not change, therefore writing an article, possibly describing what we have done at any specific meeting will be almost valueless as an informative piece of work. Each of our meetings is an evolutionary process, only the photo topic of the month being predefined and, often, the predefined topic is necessarily bypassed.

What I shall therefore attempt to do is to illustrate a process which was used in our recent (May) meeting; the topic for that month was "Dream Like Emotions."   At this point I do very much apologise to my fellow group members for not discussing with them my intentions to publish any form of article, since their shots would have been very much better than my own, with which to illustrate a possible process used to obtain the given topic.

In today's world of digital photography there are many software packages available to us which provide almost absolute editing capability for each and every original captured image. In reality one is able to create, with some educated ease, almost any scene required.

There are two distinctly separate mechanisms available to us for the creation of a desirable image; the important one (for me) is the act of using your camera; by framing, positioning and exposing correctly/artistically in terms of the available light and focusing sharply or selectively as required of the scene.   The second mechanism is the application of post processing software; which uses combinations of electronic effect filters, parameter gain block curves, pixel elimination and substitution, colour contouring and also image insertion techniques. A mixture of these techniques may be used at will.   Post processing techniques are an entirely justified and artistic process, by which to achieve a particular goal, but should not be confused with the art of photography.

Photography, for me, is the art of seeing and capturing a subject, which gives pleasure to the photographer, in real time.   To this end what I'm about to demonstrate comes close to cheating on my individual philosophy of captured image!!

My intention is to show a number of images, essentially in pairs, each pair showing the effect of applying some form of realtime image changing technique. Not forgetting that the topic was "Dream Like Emotions."

The first pair of images were of my granddaughter Penny, posing in-front of a South facing window, thereby providing lots of natural daylight.   The objective was to obtain an almost floating image of a person, completely devoid of background and therefore rather surreal.

Image No.1   Is a normal rendition, slightly overexposed to cause peak white level burn-out from the window back lighting. This to act as the control image against which to judge the idealised form.

Image No.1

Image No.2   The idealised image, the in the mind shot. The lens has been selectively covered by a fine cotton mesh, cut away in the area of the subjects features, the intention is to provide an element of light scattering and edge blur. On this occasion much more burn-out has been achieved in order to isolate the subject. I have also added a slight cheat; a Matte Mask, to produce the oval effect around the subject.

Image No.2

The second pair of images are intended to achieve the same effect, but to a lessor extent, still dreamy but not surreal.   On this occasion Penny is in the garden, which is often the setting of a dream.

Image No.3   Normal exposure producing the expected, rather boring, non artistic image. Once again this image is used as the control unit against which the group would base it's discussion arguments.

Image No.3

Image No.4   Fine mesh placed selectively over the lens, intended to provide light scattering, edge blur and selective focus. Hopefully more dreamlike.

Image No.4

The third pair of images are to act as a discussion tool, easy to see and to have immediate and identifiable constants, illustrating directly the changes made by use of the external tool, thereby achieving the benefits of real time artistic interpretation. Therefore providing some means of artistic interpretation without the need of applying digital post processing.

Image No.5   Normal exposure of a garden subject. The aperture was chosen in order to provide a minimal depth of field, otherwise sharp focus and saturated colours.

Image No.5

Image No.6   The final shot. Once again fine mesh placed selectively over the lens. Intended to produce edge blur, even shorter depth of field and de saturated colours. The aperture, focal length, metering system and ISO speeds were all the same as for image No.5, however due to, I suspect, the light scattering effect of the cotton mesh, image 6 had a slightly shorter exposure time.

Image No.6

Conclusions are: Some elements of realtime camera manipulation can produce enhanced image atmosphere. The examples shown are simple enough, one could add further techniques, for example adding filters in front of the lens. However, digital post processing is so powerful that ones palette is, sensibly, unlimited.   Further, today's cameras are now offering in-camera software which is able to emulate some of the external software applications.

Here endeth my anorak exposé of one of our talking points from the last group meeting. As I informed our group members, the images presented at that meeting were the best response in terms of interpretation of topic and colour rendition that we, the Group, have produced to date. And, my groups images were better interpretations than my own.

One of our members, who shall be nameless, Dennis; has suggested that perhaps we should put the May meetings images onto disc for presentation purposes, should the opportunity arise, in the future.

Alan Croxford   30 May 2011

Group Convenor