

Hillingdon U3A Digital Photo Group Meeting - 23rd April 2018

General

Monday's meeting was very "busy", covering:

- Len's presentation on "Your Photo and its Background"
- My presentation on "Action" Shooting
- The April Competition "Easter and/or the Easter Bunny"
- Voting on the March "High Dynamic Range ("HDR") Competition
- General announcements and plans
- *(and we were going to have a "Question and Answer" session, but unfortunately there was no time for that)*

Len's Presentation "Your Photo and its Background"

Len's presentation explored the ways in which a wide range of issues can mar otherwise good shots, and how those might be overcome at the time or later in "Post Processing" ("PP") at home. Here are some of the issues he discussed:

"Distractions" such as:

- Distracting objects in the background which draw the viewer's attention away from the main subject – so maybe reposition the subject at the time of shooting, or move/remove the distraction in PP

"Protrusions", such as:

- Trees, poles, and water fountains(!) sticking out of the tops of subjects' heads – *same "solutions" as "Distractions" above*

"Intentional Distractions" which can actually "improve" shots, such as:

- A dancer – with a large flower appearing to look like her skirt
- A flying stork (bird) in a blue sky – but with "contrails" appearing from its "rear end"!
- A man with a cow standing behind him – and with the cow's horns appearing from each side of his head!

"Conflicting or Confusing Lines", such as:

- A lady standing in a field - but with converging lines of fencing appearing to point to a white "blob" in some trees right above her head
(same "solutions" as "Distractions" above)
- A rusty old chain with some rope tied to it – but the viewer's eye being led away from the centre of the image by the angle of the chain
(correct the slight tilt in the chain which causes the eye to be drawn away, and crop slightly)
- A man sitting on the stern of a small boat – but with the boat facing out to sea and the man facing inland
(Crop out most of the boat and sea to the right of the man, so that he becomes the centre of the shot)

"Check and "modify" the background before taking the picture, such as:

The subject stands right in front of (say) a tree, which then seems to "grow" out of his head. -

- Trees, poles, and water fountains(!) sticking out of the tops of subjects' heads – *same "solutions" as "Distractions" above*
- Raise/lower camera shooting angle to avoid strong background "lines" connecting to the subject (e.g. river bank right behind subject's head)

“Isolate the subject from the background”

- At the time of shooting, use a wide Aperture (i.e. a LOW “f-number”!!) to reduce the Depth of Field – and thus render background out-of-focus

“Use a longer focal length lens than normal”

- This also reduces the Depth of Field, and thus renders background out-of-focus.

“Fill the Frame”

- If you “fill the frame” with the subject, then you automatically tend to reduce the distracting effects of objects in the background, so either do that at the time of shooting by “zooming in” (or just walking closer!) or by cropping in PP.

“Make your own Backgrounds”

- Len suggested making a library of relatively “bland” background images onto which the subject can be superimposed in PP – as he has and does very successfully.

“Intentionally Blur the Background in PP”

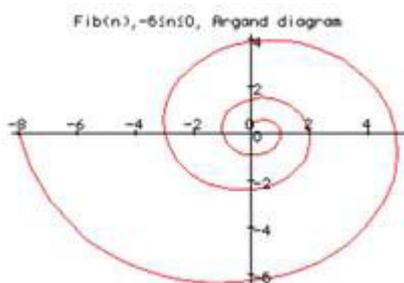
- Len showed a number of examples of where the background had been intentionally blurred, including
 - o A kingfisher (I think, but could be wrong!) - made to stand out from background trees and plants
 - o A man with a video-camera interviewing a lady in a crowded street
 - o A man with a large dog, against a complex background
 - o A lady made to more clear stand out against the background of an old house
- He did most of the above using the PS Elements Magnetic “Lasso” tool as he demonstrated later in “Blurring parts of an image in PP”

“Framing”, such as:

- Using arches in buildings, or trees, to frame the subject, so as to emphasise the latter and give “depth” to the shot.

“Placing of Secondary Subjects, such as using:

- Mentally dividing the frame using “The Rule of Thirds” to place important parts of subjects at the intersections of the lines 1/3rd & 2/3rds from top to bottom, and side to side of it
- Placing secondary subjects in the frame along a line defined by the Fibonacci formula, as illustrated by this diagram which looks like a type of seashell



“Bokeh”

- Bokeh (/ˈboʊkeɪ/ BOH-kay — also sometimes pronounced as /ˈboʊkə/ BOH-kə,[1] Japanese: [boke]) is the aesthetic quality of the blur produced in the out-of-focus parts of an image produced by a lens.[2][3][4] Bokeh has been defined as "the way the lens renders out-of-focus points of light".[5] Differences in lens aberrations and aperture shape cause some lens designs to blur the image in a way that is pleasing to the eye, while others produce blurring that is unpleasant or distracting— "good" and "bad" bokeh, respectively.[6] Bokeh occurs for parts of the scene that lie outside the

depth of field. Photographers sometimes deliberately use a shallow focus technique to create images with prominent out-of-focus regions.

- It is very dependent on the camera lens used, because the more blades there are in the lens Aperture diaphragm then the “smoother” the bokeh will be.

“Blurring parts of an image in PP”

- Len demonstrated how to blur parts of an image, such as the background (using Photoshop Elements 12), so as to concentrate the viewer’s interest on the main subject. He:
 - o Used “Expert” mode,
 - o Selected the main subject using the Magnetic Lasso tool,
 - o From the top menus, used “Select” and then “Inverse” to effectively select the background instead of the main subject
 - o From the top menu, used “Filter”, then “Blur”, then “Gaussian Blur” and then adjusted the Blur slider to vary the amount of blur to be applied to the background
 - o Finally, used “Control” + “D” to remove the “lasso” line, and that resulted in the main subject being “sharp” and the background being blurred!

After all the above, Len very deservedly got a BIG round of applause for the breadth, depth and simplicity of his presentation! ☺

My presentation on “Action” Shooting

I gave the presentation (*see attached PDF of the PowerPoint presentation – but without the linked illustrative images*) to demonstrate issues that you can encounter when taking shots of moving subjects across a whole range of locations which you might visit and activities which you might see.

The aim must be to understand how the locations and the subjects determine how best to take your shots, from where, and with what techniques and equipment (*and the inherent limitations of some equipment*) – and then “PRACTICE, PRACTICE”, “PRACTICE” because you won’t “get it right” that often until you do (*as I know from years of personal experience ☺*).

The April Competition “Easter and/or the Easter Bunny”

We recently had the Easter weekend and thus there were many religious and “family” events (*fairs, Easter Egg hunts, “Easter bunnies”, and so on*) occurring around this time, and so shots from those were theme for the April Competition – which was in the form of Prints.

We had some very good prints, and the Winners were:

- 1st - John Bentham “Lindt Rabbit in Rockery”
- 2nd - Margaret Mayes “Huge Easter Egg”
- 3rd (eq) - Brian Hillier “Trees in Bud”
- 3rd (eq) - John Bentham “Daffodils”

The Winners are asked to email their winning shots (**file size to be no larger than 5Mb!**) ASAP to the **new** email address (hillingdonu3a.pictures@gmail.com) - giving your name, the Competition name, the photo name (**AS ABOVE please**) and the place(s) achieved.

The March Competition – “High Dynamic Range (HDR)” - photos both before and after HDR processing.

Due to lack of time at the March meeting we had to delay the voting until this Monday, and so we briefly reprised viewing the images and how they had been created, then had the voting, and the Winners were:

- 1st - Ian Brown “Rivers and Trees”
- 2nd - Adele Franklin “Road in Snow”
- 3rd (eq) - John Allen “Covent Garden Market”
- 3rd (eq) - Margaret Mayes “Block of Apartments”

Note: the above photos will NOT be submitted for inclusion on the next WCH meeting presentation PowerPoint because I had submit shots at this time in March to ensure that we had a “presence” on the April meeting presentation.

Future Meetings:

May Meeting - 21st May

As previously announced, we have another date clash with the Computer Club because both groups are scheduled to meet on the 21st due to a change we had to make because our meeting was originally scheduled for Monday 28th – which is the Late May Bank Holiday.

As a result we have decided to have an off-site photoshoot instead of meeting at the Baptist Church, and the location provisionally chosen is St Martins Church and Gardens in Ruislip – see [here](#) and the attached image for more information on that location, and further details will be provided ASAP.

HOWEVER, if you still have suggestions for other suitable locations, then please let us know ASAP

More Free Photo editing Tools!

I was recently made aware of [this review](#) of some more free photo-editing tools (*The GIMP, Paint.NET, Photoscape, Pixlr Editor & Express, PicMonkey*), and I am sure we would be interested to hear your comments on these if/when you have tried them.

Reminder: 2018 Monthly meeting Diary Dates — the 4th Monday of each month (except where indicated below)

- **May 21**, June 25, Jul 23, (*Aug – no mtg*), Sept 24, Oct 22, Nov 26, **Dec 17**.

All the best and see you on **MONDAY 21st of May for the Off-site PhotoShoot!**

NB: you will soon be able to see these Notes on-line at <https://u3asites.org.uk/hillingdon/page/61662>, where you will also find those from previous meetings, and some have clickable links to more info.

Also, that if you have an Ad-blocking app loaded into your internet browser, then access to the Group's pages may be prevented until you disable it (happens to me too!)

John

And on behalf of the other members of the Steering Committee: Judy Peddie, Len Fenton, Jothy Rainbow