

inFocus

Newsletter of the Westchester Photographic Society
July/August 2014





Art vs Craft

Hello WPSers! Last month I wrote about my long-standing goal to help you develop as artists. This month I'm thinking about a related topic: art vs craft. This issue is as old as art itself, so we photographers are relative newbies to this party, but that lets us "stand on the shoulders" of generations of artists. Let me start by characterizing "craft" as the mastery of the techniques and tools we use to make "art": our visual creations. While that's overly simplified (since masterfully crafted works can be as wonderful as inspired works of art, and the two are by no means mutually exclusive), it's a useful distinction for this note.

Art and craft are intimately entwined. I've found that awareness of tools and techniques lets me imagine images would not be possible otherwise. For example, effective use of the clone tool in Photoshop lets me remove and move elements in an image, letting me improve a rendering to have a stronger artistic composition. Other examples comes from the use of Photoshop's blend modes, which can be used to adjust and combine photos and textures in a million different ways.

A somewhat different interplay between craft and art is obvious as we become more proficient craftsmen. The less effort and thought we devote to our tools and methods, the more we can focus on creative expression and discovery.

Now I find our club competitions are outstanding at helping us improve our craft, but much less useful at helping us develop our art. Our judges are well trained in matters of craft (things like exposure, dynamic range, color balance and saturation, elements and principles of composition, etc.) and they can be somewhat objective about these things. That's a good thing. It gives us a well defined way to grow our craft and feel good as we improve.

But how do we develop our art? This is harder and less well understood, and it's the reason I'm trying the out-of-the-box break-out groups on Aug.15 (and I'll explain them on Aug.1). If you're still uneasy about labeling yourself as an artist, consider this excerpt from Dr Henry Sayre's book titled "A World of Art" (Prentice Hall, 1st edition 1994, and now in it's 7th edition 2012). He suggests the four roles traditionally assigned to artists are:

1. to produce a record of their surroundings
2. to express emotions in a tangible or visible manner
3. to reveal truths that are either universal or were hidden
4. to help people view the world from a different or novel perspective

Do you find your reasons for loving and practicing photography in that list? I do.

Sincerely Yours,

Jim Christensen, Pres.

Cover photo
Buck In Velvet
by Dick Budnik

inFocus

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newsletter: infocus@wpsphoto.org
www.wpsphoto.org

Westchester Photographic Society

meets 12 months a year, on Friday evenings at 8:00 pm (excepting school holidays) in the Technology Building of Westchester Community College, Valhalla, NY (across from parking lot #11). Guests are welcome.



WPS Friday Evening Program Schedule

July

- 4 No Meeting: Independence Day
- 11 No Meeting: NECCC Conference
- 18 B'Day/Mentoring/Out of the Box
- 25 Outside Speaker

August

- 1 Processing Techniques/Breaking Out of the Box explained
- 8 B'Day/Mentoring/Showcases
- 15 Break Out of the Box
- 22 Outside Speaker
- 29 No Meeting: Labor Day

September

- 5 TBE
- 12 Competition 1A
- 19 Deborah Cohen, "GCT"
- 26 Competition 1B

October

- 3 No Meeting
- 10 TBE
- 17 Jim Christensen, "Plug-Ins"
- 24 Competition 2A
- 31 Halloween Theme Out of the Box

November

- 2 WPS Annual Dinner at La Catena
3 PM Sunday
- 7 Competition 2B
- 14 Lewis Bogaty, "Backyard Bird Photography"
- 21 TBE
- 28 No Meeting: Happy Thanksgiving

December

- 5 Competition 3A
- 12 TBE
- 19 Holiday Party
- 26 No Meeting: Merry Christmas

Please note:

Check the WPS website (wpsphoto.org) for recent changes.

Weather Notice

If driving conditions are hazardous, meetings will be cancelled. Look for announcements of Westchester Community College (WCC) closings on the following media outlets:

WFAS 103.9 FM / 1230 AM

WHUD 100.7 FM

WCBS 880 AM

TV News 12

www.wfasfm.com

Members are advised to check their email for emergency weather notices from WPS.

Former WPS member Stacy Jo Grant took this picture, published in Sports Illustrated



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Contact Information

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome and should be addressed as follows: If concerning the WPS Newsletter, In Focus, address comments to the editor at infocus@wpsphoto.org. If concerning our website, address comments to our webmaster, Dick Budnik, at webmaster@wpsphoto.org. All other comments should be addressed to our President, Warren Rosenberg, at photoprof@optonline.net. (914) 827-5353

New York City Museums

Metropolitan Museum

(www.metmuseum.org)

*Now You See It:
Photography and Concealment*
Exhibit: Through Sept. 1

Museum of Modern Art

(www.moma.org)

Permanent Photo Collection

*A World of Its Own:
Photographic Practices in the Studio*
Exhibit: Feb. 8 - Oct. 5

International Center for Photography

(www.icp.org)

*Urbes Mutantes: Latin American
Photography 1941-2012*

Caio Reisewitz
Exhibits: May 16-Sept. 7

Museum of the City of New York

(www.mcny.org)

Many ongoing exhibits

Palaces for People
Exhibit: Through Sept. 7

aperture foundation

(www.aperture.org)

*The Sochi Project: An Atlas of War and
Tourism in the Caucasus*
Exhibit: May 30-July 10

Throckmorton Fine Art

(www.throckmorton-nyc.com)

145 East 57th St., 3rd Fl. NYC

Homage
Exhibit: Through July 12, 2015

THANKS!

I want to thank Carolyn Colella, Lois Barker, Jackie Ross, Mark Friedman and Roseanne and Walter Kimmel for their help with the JCC exhibit.

and

Carolyn Colella, Lois Barker and Mark Friedman for help with the Cancer center exhibit.

Liza Margulies

WPS Group Exhibits

NWH Chappaqua Crossing

"Sports Photography"
Exhibit: Ongoing
Ongoing

Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center

Northern Westchester Hospital

"Garden Variety"
Exhibit: June, 2014 - Jan., 2015

WPS Member Exhibits

More to come

Westchester Museums

Hudson River Museum

(www.hrm.org)

Photographs Collection

Katonah Museum of Art

(www.katonahmuseum.org)

More to come

Neuberger Museum of Art

(www.neuberger.org)

Ongoing exhibits

Art League of Long Island

(www.artleagueli.org)

Photo competition and exhibit:
Pattern and Rhythm Through the Lens
(juried)

Exhibit: Sept. 28 - Nov. 2
Deadline for submissions: Aug. 19

Photo Seminars

(Samplings only. Please log on to websites to see the entire schedules)

B&H Photo

<http://www.bhphotovideo.com/find/EventSpace.jsp>

- July 1 Travel Photography: Yips and Techniques
with Lester Lefkowitz
- July 2 Photoshop Grab Bag
with Andy Graber
- July 3 Power to the People: How to Go Around the Gallery System and Successfully Sell Pictures at Art Festivals and Fairs
with Deborah Gilbert
- July 8 The Business of Wedding Photography
with Moshe Zusman
Perfect Venue Lighting
with Moshe Zusman
- July 9 The Wedding Business
(Sponsored by Panasonic)
with Kristen Jensen
- July 15 Concentrate on the Picture
with George Diebold
- July 16 Migration to Mirrorless Digital Camerast
with Gabriel Biderman
- July 22 Night Photography: From Snapshots to Great Shots
with Gabriel Biderman

Adorama Photo

<http://www.adorama.com/workshops/ws-archives>

Hunt's Event

Location Lighting

with Rick Friedman—Holyoke

<http://wbhunt.com/blog/location-lighting-with-rick-friedman-holyoke/>

Host for June, Peter Nagy

Peter, a diamond technologist, is well acquainted with beautiful photography—his own! It has been exhibited throughout the county with the two other Westchester clubs CCCW and Red River. His main photographic interests lie in street photography, architecture, night photography, abandoned America, travel and children. When not photographing, Peter enjoys wine, cooking, golf, art and the theater. We heartily welcome him to WPS.



Host for June, Jon Bernz

Jon Bernz got excellent photo advice at Sam's Camera. They recommended he come to WPS. A professional in real estate consulting and valuation, Jon finds much pleasure in photographing landscapes, night street scenes, travel, and not surprisingly, older buildings, etc. A man of varied interests, Jon also enjoys skiing, sailing, hiking and antique cars and bikes. We must send Sam's a special thank you!



Digital B&W



Bob Piro: First



Anastasia Tompkins: Second



Joyce Blumenthal: Third

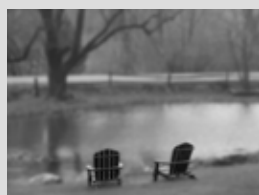


Lewis Bogaty: HM



Dennis Thornton: HM

Prints B&W

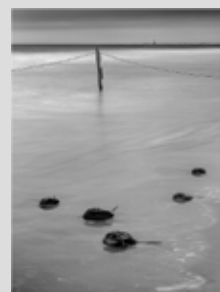


Arnold Breisblatt: First



Joe Ferreira: Second

Dennis Thornton: Third



Dennis Thornton: Third



Arnold Breisblatt: HM

Prints Color



Dennis Thornton: First



Arnold Breisblatt: Second

Joe Ferreira: Second

Joe Ferreira: Third



Serge Migdal: HM

Theme



Inese Moore: First



Albert Tang: Second

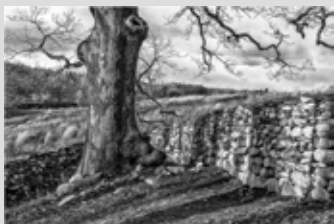


Marty Bernstein: Third



Jim Christensen: HM

B&W Prints



Dennis Thornton: First

Joe Ferreira: Second

Joe Ferreira: Third



Arnold Breisblatt: HM

Color Prints



Dennis Thornton: First



Serge Migdal: Second



Arnold Breisblatt: Third



Serge Migdal: HM

Digital B&W



Inese Moore: First



Joyce Blumenthal: Second



Harvey Augenbraun: Third



Anastasia Tompkins: HM

Digital Color B



Adelaide Boemio: First



Arnold Breisblatt: Second



Adelaide Boemio: Third



Carolyn Colella: HM

Digital Color A



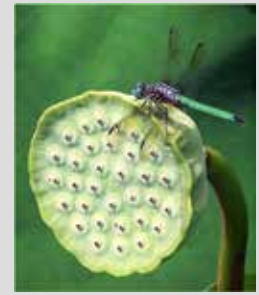
Jim Christensen: First



Marty Bernstein: Second



Jackie Ross: Third



Marty Bernstein: HM

Digital Color Salon



Janet King: First



Dennis Thornton: Second



Harvey Augenbraun: Third

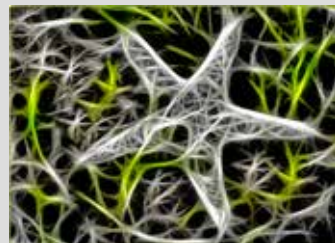


Harvey Augenbraun: HM

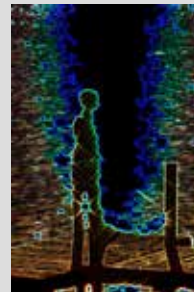
Digital Open Mind



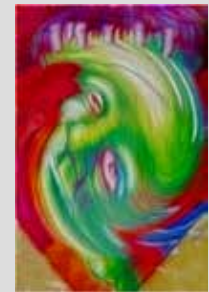
Joyce Blumenthal: First



Anastasia Tompkins: Second



Arnold Breisb;att: Third



Adelaide Boemio: HM

Judges



Judges: Ford Weissberg, Andrew Kurchy & Tom Doyle

Anastasia Tompkins

May 30



photos by Deborah Lea Cohen and Elinor Stecker-Orel

Competition 6B/Theme 2

June 6



photos by Arnold Breisblatt and Clark Thompson

Yael Ben-Zion

June 13



photos by Rafael Molina and Clark Thompson

End of Year Competition

June 20



photos by Sherm Shiao and Clark Thompson

A CAGEY WEEKEND IN PHILADELPHIA

by Deborah Lea Cohen

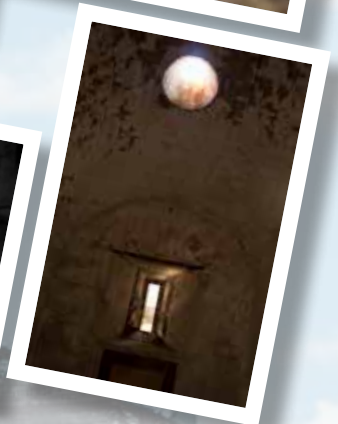
ON SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 2014, nineteen intrepid WPS members descended on Philadelphia for the weekend. The plan was to go to Eastern State Penitentiary on Saturday, then the Philadelphia Zoo on Sunday.

In 1829 Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP), was the first prison built with all sections, cell blocks, kitchen, etc., flanging out from the center. The original idea was to create a rehabilitating environment. However, it was closed as a prison in 1971 after years of objections from public and official sources of it's inhumane treatment of the hugely overcrowded population. After years of abandoned disrepair, it was decided to do just enough repairs to keep the building safe for tourists but with the delightfully corroding walls, cells, ceilings and so on intact...a photographers' heaven.

Thirty years later, The Philadelphia Zoo, another historic institution, the first zoo in the USA opened in 1859. This was the same year Darwin (appropriately) published *The Origin of the Species*, Dickens published *A Tale of Two Cities*, London's Big Ben rang for the first time and the first oil well was drilled in Titusville, PA.

Of course, dinner had to be taken care of so we went across the street from EPS to Zorba's Tavern for a most delicious Greek meal. Several of us were still full of energy, so we went to Penn's Landing to shoot the harbor, another historic spot.

So, in 2014, we went to photograph these fascinating and historic places. Included are a few comments of the participants.



Rafael: "Once again a memorable road trip by The Westchester Photographic Society. This time to the infamous Eastern State Penitentiary. The penitentiary long abandoned makes for a photographers playground. There was no shortage of subjects to shoot and areas to explore. A creepy place and not someplace I'd like to stay for any length of time. After a wonderful Greek dinner, we were off to Penn's Landing to capture some night shots of The Ben Franklin Bridge. A fun time and an opportunity to interact with the locals. The next day The Philadelphia Zoo more photo op's. Overall a complete photographers dream week-end. Thank you Deborah for a well organized trip and weekend."

Jasmin: "This trip was amazing, the architecture of the building quickly captured my attention. Once we started the tour, I couldn't wait to go inside and explore. I was mostly captivated by the cells, and the long hallways. Although certain areas gave off an ominous feel, it was also inviting. I had a great time!"

Bobby: "Following Dennis around yielded this lovely shadow shot of his success in finally getting his lens cap off. At the time we were all absorbed with the impressive naval show at Penn's landing in Phil."

Dennis: "ESP—fascinating place with many nooks and crannies to look into and photograph. Penn's landing—great place to wander around."

Tom: "We photographed the old and the new, the discarded and the modern metropolis in the daylight and the night. We shot photographs of an abandoned prison to the Philadelphia Zoo and city landscape at night off the Delaware River. We dined Greek and local. We shared an experience."

Photographs are by Bob Blumenthal, Clark Thompson, Deborah Lea Cohen, Dennis Thornton, Jasmin Rodriguez and Gladys and Rafael Molina and Ron Carran.

And why was it a "cagey" weekend? Cagey can mean careful, cautious, discreet, guarded, shrewd, wary, or wily—all things needed to build ESP as well as being descriptive of its inmates. Cagey can also mean wary of being trapped as the animals captured and brought to the zoo. It could, in the best tradition of the punning WPS, mean we would be shooting cages both empty and lived in for two days.

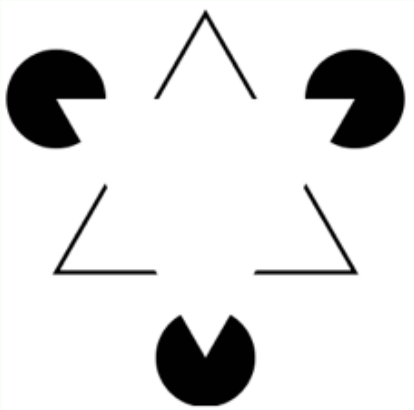
We are planning some captivating new trips and hope you will join us next time. In the meantime, just keep your cameras ready, your batteries charged, your camera's batteries charged, your memory cards available and your eyes open for new and unusual images...I promise, they are right in front of you!



What You View Is Not Always What You See

Since writing the InFocus presidents column for the December 2013 issue, I've become somewhat obsessed with the concept of the open composition photograph and have been attempting to learn as much about it, how a viewer responds to it, and the elements of neurophysiology and psychology that drive that response. The technique of open composition explains, in part, why Georgia O'Keefe paintings are so intriguing, why magazine cover photographs often crop off portions of peoples' heads and perhaps why we may prefer Coke over Pepsi.

As "image makers" photographers should be aware that although visual images are captured by the retina of our eyes, they are actually "seen," interpreted, understood and appreciated in the brain. The visual cortex of the brain, residing at the back of skull, is responsible for receiving, processing and interpreting visual information received from our eyes. The visual image created by the cortex is only partly drawn from what our eyes have viewed. The final image created by the brain is also influenced by our prior experiences and knowledge.



In the figure at left, used in psychology and neurophysiology studies and known as a Kaniza figure, we see a set of three circles, each with a triangular notch arranged alongside three simple incomplete triangles. When viewed, most people will see two triangles in the center, one overlapping the other as in a Star of David configuration. In reality, those two triangles don't exist, they are created in our visual cortex as a manifestation of the brain's tendency to try and complete incomplete images (1). While most everyone clearly sees the two triangles, those with knowledge of human cultural history will see the Star of David. Neither the two triangles nor the Star of David are actually there.

Similarly, when presented with an image parts of which are blocked or cropped outside of the frame so that the whole cannot be seen, our brain attempts to predict what the missing elements are and prepare a complete picture (2). The tendency of our brain to do this is referred to as the concept of closure in Gestalt theory and, by activating and engaging other regions of brain in order to do so, gets us more involved in looking at, processing, and interpreting the image. A current and very prominent example of this is the Diet Coke can that many of us are familiar with but perhaps haven't really noticed.



Taking this a step further yet, research has shown that when presented with a gray-tone or black and white image, our brain will encode the color of what it predicted the object to be, yellow for bananas and red for strawberries, for example. It was again, these same regions of the visual cortex where this process took place (3).

Some of my favorite and most well-received photographs, below, are open compositions.



When viewing an indeterminate image - one that doesn't initially seem to make sense—for example, in our Open Mind category of competition photos, we also spend more time with, and commit more cerebral processing power toward interpreting, the image. Indeterminate art compositions trigger an unusually high state of awareness and involved higher brain centers as opposed to the more passive response to viewing objects that are immediately recognized and involve only the visual cortex(4). This makes them inherently more interesting to us.

While it is entirely up to us to create what the viewer is looking at, we have much less control over what the viewer actually sees. Perhaps that explains why the wonderful image you submitted in our last competition fell flat with the judge.

1. Ffytche, D.H. and S. Zeki. Brain Activity Related to the Perception of Illusory Contours. *Neuroimage*. 3:104-108. 1996
2. "What our eyes can't see, the brain fills in." *Phys.org*. 4 Apr 2011. <http://phys.org/news/2011-04-eyes-brain.html>
3. "Decoding the Yellow of a Gray Banana" by Michael M. Bannert and Andreas Bartels in *Current Biology*. doi:10.1016/j.cub.2013.09.016
4. Ishai, I. in: *Art Compositions Elicit Distributed Activation in the Human Brain*. *Aesthetic Science: Connecting Minds, Brains, and Experience*. A.P. Shimamura and S.E. Palmer (Eds). Oxford university Press

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The Newsletter of the
Westchester Photographic Society
Ron Carran, editor
P.O. Box 14
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