

Gill Moon Photography Photo Club



January 2023 Challenge 1 Creativity

Hello

and welcome to my new monthly photo club challenges.

Each month I will be setting a new challenge for club members to work with. The challenges are not designed to be competitive but they are designed to be fun and inspiring and help you grow as a photographer.

Every other month we will be looking at the work of different photographers who are 'masters' in their chosen field of photography. We will examine how they make their images and discuss how you can use their techniques in your own work. I hope these will be inspiring sessions.

Every monthly challenge will be followed by a 1.5 hour Zoom session (which is entirely optional) on the last Wednesday of every month where we will discuss some of the submitted images and talk about what worked and what didn't. I hope this feedback will be useful.

Thank you very much for being part of the Photo Club and I hope you will find it a fun and rewarding challenge.

Gill.

Creativity and how to find it.

The New Year offers us a fantastic opportunity to reflect on our photography, to work out what is going right, what doesn't work and to try and inspire ourselves for another year of image making.

When we spend our time photographing the same local landscapes we can often feel that our creativity is being stifled and motivation can be hard to come by. So with this in mind my first photo club challenge is all about Creativity and opening ourselves up to new possibilities and new ways of making images. After all if we never experiment with different techniques in our photography we will never grow as photographers.

What is creativity?

'Creativity is seeing what others see and thinking what no one else has ever thought.'
- Albert Einstein

In a nut shell creativity in photography is deliberately making choices which will affect the appearance of our images. So rather than just pointing our camera at a scene and firing off a few shots we are deliberately making choices about our aperture, shutter speed, depth of field and composition that will all have an effect on the appearance of our final image.

Everyone is creative to some degree, it is part of being human, but sometimes we don't realise it.

Showing our creativity in photography is all about finding our own voice. Sometimes this can feel daunting, overwhelming or just plain impossible to achieve but the more we get out and take pictures the more our creativity will grow.

The key to finding our creativity is to think outside of the box.

"To me, photography is an art of observation. It's about finding something interesting in an ordinary place.... I've found it has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them."

Elliott Erwitt

Observation is the key to great images. You cannot take good pictures if you are blind to the world and the possibilities it offers.

Observation comes with practice, it is a skill that can be learned and improved upon over time.

When we talk about 'seeing the landscape' we are really talking about observation.

Think about the simple act of taking a walk - what do you actually notice - I mean really notice when you are out for a walk? We look at the environment as we walk through it, we might notice the beauty in a scene but do we really look at all the elements that make up the scene? Do we notice the textures, the colours, the tiny details, the way the light falls on the landscape, the shadows and the highlights. If we are being honest most of us would probably say that on a normal walk in the countryside we wouldn't be aware of these details. But to take a good image that conveys the essence of a place you have to notice everything.

As we walk around a landscape we absorb the sights, sounds, smells of the area and what it feels like to touch certain elements. We can use these experiences to try and convey the atmosphere or the soul of the place we are photographing.

When you see an object try to see it in all its elemental ways - look at its shape, its texture, its colour and the way the light is hitting it.

To be a good photographer you have to be

good at visual exploration. You have to be able to watch and observe a subject and then translate your observations into images.

Good photographic expression is impossible without good seeing.



This image was made on Achnahaird Beach in Coigach and forms part of my 'At the edge of Permenance' book. The settings were F10, 1/250 second, ISO 400.

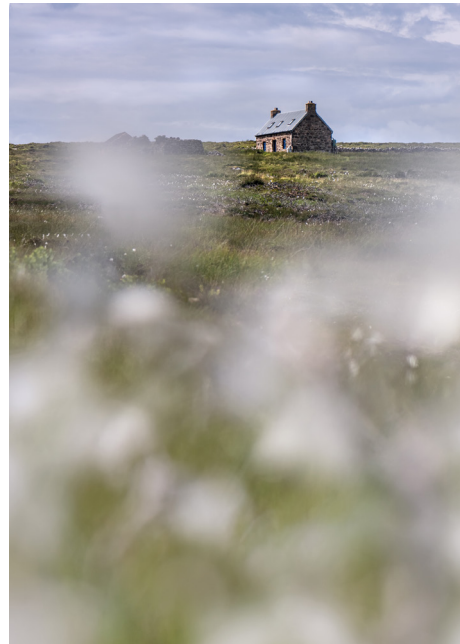
The image above was taken looking into a stream which runs adjacent to Achnahaird beach in the NW Highlands. It was the light dancing over the water that caught my eye and attracted me to the scene. I used a polariser to cut out the glare on the surface of the water which made the seaweed stand out, but it is the abstracted light on the water that makes this image interesting.

The next two images were also taking in Scotland. They show two different ways of portraying cotton grass which grows on the coastal fringes during the summer.

The first shot is a wider scene which was taken with a 105mm macro lens. This has a really narrow plane of focus. Combining this with a wide aperture and the focus on the cottage has enabled me to create a shot where the cotton grass is completely blurred and

abstract looking.

The second shot focuses on one head of cotton grass. I used a shallow depth of field and the technique of shooting through to create a dreamy look to the image.



Camera settings for this image: F5.6 at 1/2500, ISO 200, focal length 105mm focusing on the cottage.



Camera settings for this image: F5.6 at 1/3200, ISO 200, focal length 105mm shooting through the foreground grass to create a blurred front edge to the image.

Creative Choices

In this section we are going to talk about some of the creative techniques you could use to make your photograph for this month's challenge.

The first is Motion Blur.

Motion Blur

Motion blur is achieved by using a slow shutter speed to blur the movement of elements in your image. This is a creative choice and is often used to give an ethereal effect to water as in the image below.



This image was made on Bawdsey Beach. The camera settings were: F16 at 20 seconds, ISO 50. The slow shutter speed was achieved using a 6 stop ND filter and a 0.6 ND grad to balance the exposure of the sky and make sure the white edges of the clouds weren't overexposed.

However it can also be used to blur other elements such as the reeds in the following image. Try experimenting with vehicles, people, trees, anything wind-blown or moving.



This image was made around the ponds at East Lane, Bawdsey. The camera settings were: F16 at 0.5 second, ISO 100. This has resulted in a lovely painterly effect in the reeds. Any longer would have rendered them completely soft.

When you are working with motion blur think carefully about the effect that you want to achieve. Different shutter speeds will give very different effects.

When working with water 10 seconds or more will give a milky, ethereal effect.

0.5 seconds to about 1 second will give water a lovely texture and is good for creating streaky lines to show the motion of the waves.

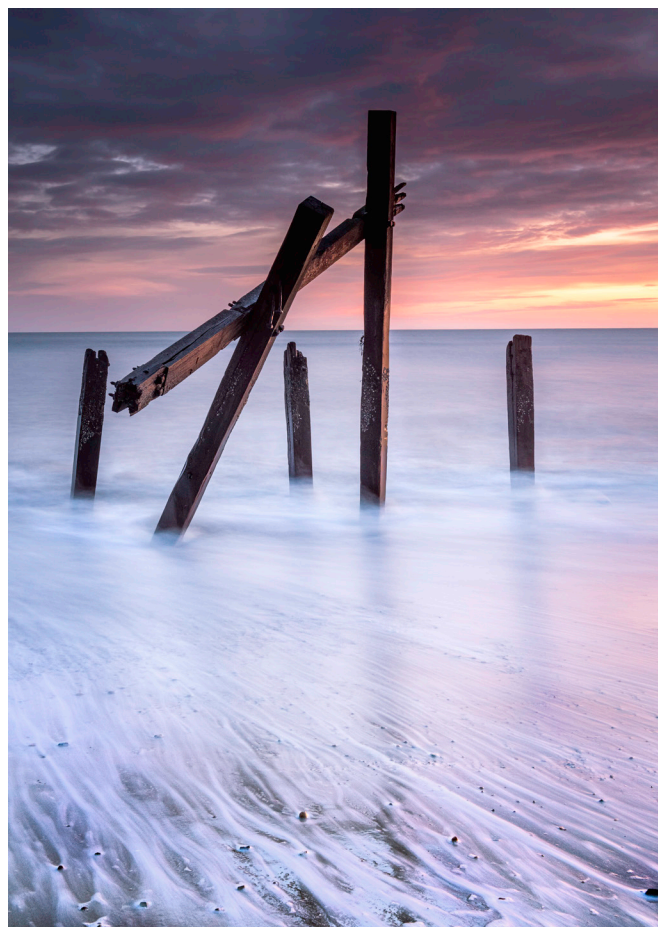
These shutter speeds are just a guide and obviously the speed that the water is moving will have a huge effect on the way it gets rendered by your choice of shutter speed.

On the opposite page are three examples of images I have taken using motion blur. Under each image I have recorded the shutter speeds so that you can see the effects each has on the rendition of the water.

The best way to achieve motion blur in your photography is to shoot in manual mode. Decide what sort of image you want to create - milky water (shutter speed more than 10 seconds) or textured water, (shutter speed



Yorkshire waterfall - camera settings: F5.6 at 1/5 second, ISO 100.



Happisburgh Beach - camera settings: F16 at 6 seconds, ISO 400.



Luskentyre beach - camera settings: F16 at 1.6 second, ISO 31.

somewhere between 0.3 and 5 seconds depending on the speed of flow) then set your shutter speed. Select the aperture that is roughly what you need for the depth of field you require and then use the ISO to adjust the exposure - you can tweek the aperture too if you need to but be mindful of how it affects your depth of field.

You don't have to use water for your motion blur images. If you want to be really creative think about the following:
Traffic and tail lights make great trails through a town or city when captured with a slow shutter speed.
Photograph a busy place like a railway station or a bustling street or seafront. If your shutter speed is not too slow you will render some people blurred and some stationary.
Capture contrast using stillness and movement - eg. someone waiting at a station as a busy train rushes past.

Bokeh

The word Bokeh comes from the Japanese word Boke meaning blur. Essentially it is the term used to describe out of focus highlights in an image.

To achieve good bokeh you will need a fast lens of at least F2.8 - prime lenses are really good for achieving this effect. You will need to shoot with the lens wide open and create a good distance between your subject and its background.

Arrange your composition so that you are shooting into the light. Select the widest aperture possible and a long focal length you should should achieve some good results.

The image below uses the light bouncing off the dew on the grass to create the out of focus highlights.



Rendlesham Forest- camera settings: F3.5 at 1/640 second, ISO 100, focal length 200mm.



Coigach, Highlands - camera settings: F5.6 at 1/250 second, ISO 200, focal length 105mm

The image above uses the out of focus highlights on the sea to create a lovely bokeh in the background of this image. For the best results in situations like this it is best to get down as low as you can and shoot on the same level as the light. In other words, this image was taken with my camera lens almost parallel to the surface of the water.

One of my favourite landscape photographers using this technique is Sandra Bartocha. If you haven't seen any of her work I suggest you check out this article below for some extra inspiration.

www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/technique/spring-forward-interview-sandra-bartocha-117829

ICM and Multiple Exposure

'Why limit yourself to what your eyes see when you have such an opportunity to extend your vision?'

- Edward Weston

ICM stands for intentional camera movement. For these images the movement has to be planned - a deliberate action with a creative outcome.

ICM adds to an image, it doesn't make an image in its own right. For the technique to work well you will need to aim for the correct exposure and look for contrast, balance and good light within your image. Also try to retain the essence of the location.

There are numerous ways to move your camera when working with ICM and the best advice is to experiment. You will get lots of images that don't work but if you accept as part of the technique you are likely to feel less frustrated with your efforts.

In general terms try the following camera movements for these different subjects:

- For landscapes or seascapes move the camera to follow the direction of the land, sea or horizon.
- For trees move the camera in an upwards motion following the trunks
- For features in the landscape such as rivers, walls or paths follow the direction of each different feature.
- For water or people follow the direction of movement.
- For buildings try shaking the camera with small movements.

Each move that you make will result in a different effect. ICM images are impossible to replicate as you will never be able to repeat your movements exactly, so each image will be unique.

The image that follows was taken in woodlands at Westonbrit Arboretum in

early autumn. I used a 70-200mm lens and a polariser to help cut out some of the light and achieve a shutter speed of just over a second.

I used small shaking movements to achieve this almost painterly, impressionistic effect.

The dark trunks and the bright leaves give a good contrast to the image and the person creates a nice focal point.

Despite the relative long exposure the small movements that I made with the camera mean that the subject matter is still recognisable. I also feel that the dappled light and painterly effect really capture the essence of the wood at that time.



Westonbirt Arboretum - camera settings: F22 at 1.3 seconds, ISO 100, focal length 70mm

Multiple Exposure is a method of taking 2 or more exposures on top of each other either in camera or by using multiple images in Photoshop.

Not all cameras will allow you to do multiple exposure in camera so it is best to check your camera manual or look through your menu system.

If multiple exposures are possible in camera you will need to select the number of images you want to shoot, followed by the blend mode (I usually use average)

Some cameras will allow you to see the first

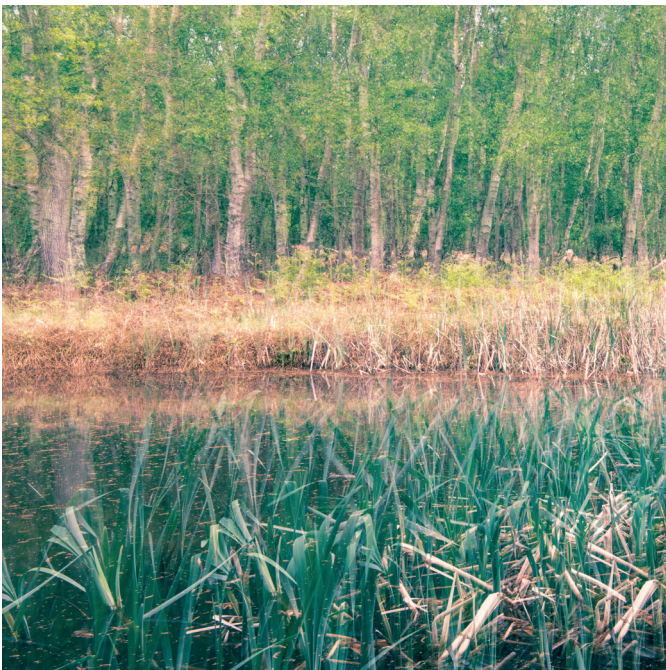
image you have taken so that you can line up subsequent exposures and see how they will overlay on each other.

Other cameras (including my Nikon D850) are not quite so good and you can't see the first image to overlay the second and subsequent shots. In this case you have to guess the position of the initial exposure which then makes your image more about trial and error than creativity.

Multiple exposure in camera is a technique that may produce more images for the bin than keepers but it is good fun experimenting and can yield some really interesting results.

For multiple exposure images in post processing open all the images as layers in Photoshop then choose a blend mode to suit your taste - each mode will give a very different effect.

The following two images were both made using in camera multiple exposure. I used 3 shots for each image and only moved the camera slightly between each exposure. This has given a rather painterly effect to both images.



In summary the key to creativity is to be curious, open minded and to experiment with your work. Try to get out with your camera as often as you can, the more you photograph the more you are likely to try new things.

Treat your camera as an observational tool. American photographer Dorothea Lange said *'The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.'* In other words looking for something to photograph will help you notice the world around you in all its complexities.

Study other photographers work. The internet is a fantastic resource for learning and there are a host of inspiring photographers out there. Below are a couple of really creative photographers I suggest you look at:

Glenys Garnet

Glenys is a creative photographic artist working in the north of England. On her website she describes herself in the following way

'I am not a purist about photography, it is simply a medium. I use the camera as a tool, the first part of the process of producing an image, often with an artistic intent rather than

a documentary capture. This may involve a number of creative techniques, including multiple exposure, ICM (intentional camera movement) and sometimes a combination of both.

I find Glenys' work endlessly fascinating. It has a soft ethereal beauty to it and I believe it is born from a talent for observation and a passion for the natural world (as well as a really obvious creative eye). She also has a lovely way of displaying her images in grids which are usually based around the colour pallets of the component images.

www.ggcreativeimages.co.uk

Charlotte Bellemy

Charlotte is another creative photographer who lives and works in the Netherlands. On her website she describes her work in the following way

'I create my images using a combination of Intentional camera movement (ICM) and also double exposures. Some of my images are created in a moment of spontaneity, whilst others are carefully combined to replicate a memory. I love the ICM technique for the freedom it allows me from focussing purely on the technical aspects of photography. It's fun to experiment and create something closer to art, stretching the envelope of photography in new directions. The use of double exposures allows me to explore the feeling further; adding softness, texture, contrast, depth and colour.'

Much of Charlottes work is made in her local forests and her images have a very painterly feel to them.

www.charlottebellamy.com

January's Photography Challenge

This months challenge is to produce one image using either:

Motion Blur - this does not have to be an image composed around water, although it could be. You are free to be creative and use anything that moves.

Bokeh - use the light and conditions to produce a dreamy soft focus image

ICM - produce an image that uses ICM to change the feel of the landscape or subject you are shooting. Focus on capturing the 'essence' of the location rather than a straight forward depiction of a scene.

Multiple Exposure - this can be achieved in camera or in post processing but whichever method you choose it should be an obvious composite created with intent and meaning.

ICM and Multiple Exposure - you can produce an image using both methods maybe drawing inspiration from Glenys Garnet or Charlotte Bellemy.

The Zoom session for this challenge will take place on Wednesday 25th January between 7pm and 8.30pm.