

Focal Points

The Official Newsletter of the Flagpole Photography Club

Volume 2

Issue#11- October 2009



NEXT MEETING:
November 19, 2009

LOCATION:
Cyrenius H. Booth Library
Newtown, CT

PROGRAM:
Gary Sprint
Thematic Landscape and Scenic
Photography

Assigned Topic:
Shadows

OCTOBER'S PROGRAM: THAILAND IMAGES

Lisa Keller, a documentary filmmaker from the Bridgeport Camera Club, shared her images of Thailand last month. Ornate temples and statues, local floating markets stocked with colorful and exotic foods, elephant rides in the Khao Yai National Park, and the King of Thailand's 80th birthday barge parade were only a few of the highlights of her slide presentation. Using Pro Show Producer, her presentation effectively made use of quick dissolves from video to still images.

OCTOBER MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

We had another strong turnout and we welcomed two more new members: Markus Balas and L. Adriana Gomez.

* * * *

The Economic Development Commission of Newtown is now selecting our member photos to be featured on its website and expects to have the site up by the end of the year, complete with a link back to the Flagpole Photographers' website.

* * * *

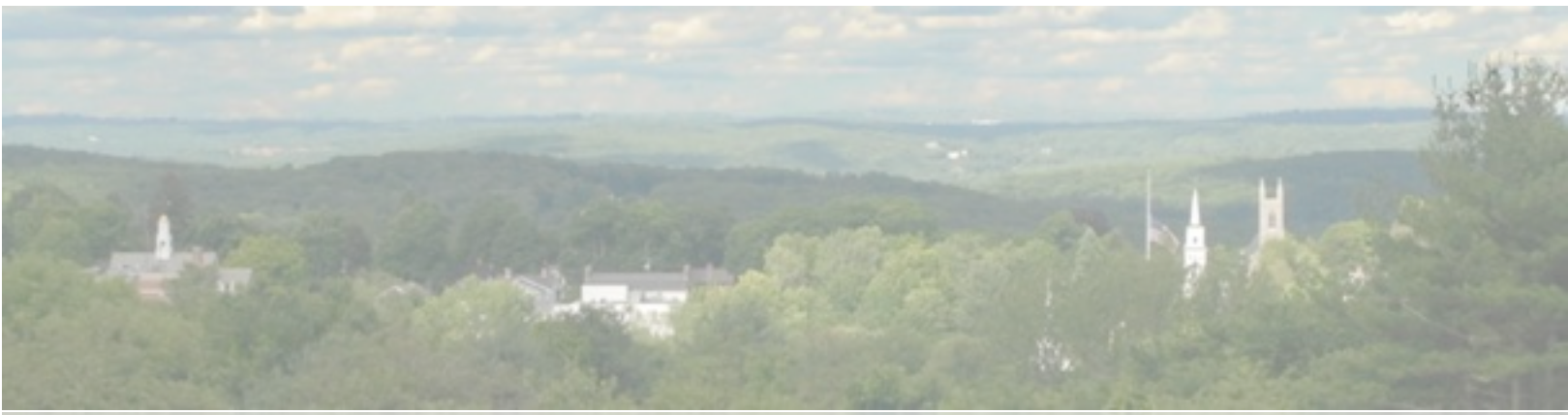
The Art Anderson Memorial Exhibit concluded October 30th, but books featuring a collection of his work are still available by contacting Jan Sansevera at 203-270-6004

"YOUR TOWN" PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW

Koenig Frameworks in Newtown is holding its first annual juried photo show. Images may be from any town in Connecticut. The deadline for submission is November 21. For more information call (203) 270-1887 or visit www.koenigframeworks.com.

BRAD STANTON'S DIGITAL ROUNDTABLES

Brad, joined by Ken Graff, generously opens his studio to us all for discussions on photography, the digital darkroom, and computers the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at 18 Finance Drive, Danbury, CT, 203-743-4508. Get your questions answered and hear the latest developments in the world of photography.



This month we introduce a new feature aimed at getting to know our members a little better. Our co-president, Don Brooks, has agreed to serve as the guinea pig for this venture and here's what he had to say:

What led you to get into photography?

At about 9-10, I had a Kodak Brownie camera I tried to use. It had a flash attachment that I could never get to work; I did take some outdoor shots occasionally, but not seriously. As a senior in high school, my dad, who owned and edited a weekly newspaper in Illinois, wanted me to learn photography so he could print pictures in his paper. He contracted with a local commercial photographer to teach me; we built a darkroom and I was hooked. In college, as a journalism student, I became more interested in photojournalism and with the best equipment available at the time, I got serious.

What one piece of photographic equipment (besides your camera) can you not live without?

All my lighting equipment. I have a makeshift studio in my basement with lights, backgrounds and other accessories.

What is your biggest photographic achievement?

Probably in college when I became Chief Photographer of the undergraduate publications my junior and senior years. Our yearbook won national awards.

What is your biggest photographic challenge?

Getting things right in the camera. I often tend to overlook simple things that could make the photo better.

Today, I have invested in more sophisticated equipment and the opportunity to experiment with studio lighting setups inspires me. I am always looking to improve my results.

Which photographer(s) inspire(s) you?

In college my photojournalism instructor was one of the best in the country. He won national awards nearly every year. Today, frankly, I'm inspired the most by people in our camera club.

Describe your dream photographic field trip.

I'd like to have about a month to shoot the National Parks in Utah. I passed through three of them in the 80's, but I was on vacation and just casually shooting color slides with a 35 mm camera I had just purchased. Today, I'd like to repeat the experience as a more serious photography endeavor.

LIGHTROOM 3 BETA ANNOUNCED

If you've been interested in exploring Lightroom, Adobe has launched a beta version of Lightroom 3. A free download is available and good through April 30, 2010. Get the link by going to <http://labs.adobe.com/technologies/lightroom3/>.

Lightroom is post-processing software designed for photographers and projected improvements found in this test version include a redesigned importing feature, pro-level noise reduction, and drag-and-drop publishing to the Web.

<http://thelightroomlab.com/>

resources_for_lightroom_3_beta.html

<http://paworkshops.net/>

<http://www.davidmiddletonphoto.com/>

<http://blogs.adobe.com/lightroomjournal/2009/10/>

DAVID MIDDLETON SEMINAR REVIEW

by Benay Yaffe

The way the one-liners were flying at David Middleton's seminar, one might think his career as one of the most acclaimed nature photographers in the country were in jeopardy and he was looking to stand-up comedy as his next gig. At his seminar entitled "Getting the Most from Your Photography", sponsored by the Charter Oak Photographic Society in East Hartford on November 14, 2009, he kept them coming. Nothing and nobody, including himself, was safe from his trenchant eye.

He kept up the sotto voce running commentary throughout the day-long presentation: over-reliance on Photoshop to rescue bad photographs "cough, cough, Scott Kelby". He cited highly respected colleagues like Art Wolfe "when he's sober". He showed the audience his own outtakes including the "headless farrier" and the "new one-legged horse" from an assignment shooting a thoroughbred horse farm.

All his humor had a point, though. It is part of the story. Vermont-based Middleton says that everyone loves a story and for him, learning to tell the story has arisen out of necessity and has also forced him out of his comfort zone. For example, when he pitched the project which became his book *The Nature of Vermont—A Year-Long Photographic Journal*, his editor surprised him by requesting he write text to go along with his photographs. He confided that as a nature photographer he was not comfortable with the level of intimacy involved in photographing people. But a book project shooting a local dairy farm and the family who has worked it for generations forced him to examine his own discomfort and challenge his assumptions that just because he was uncomfortable photographing people that people are necessarily uncomfortable being photographed.

Interwoven amid Middleton's stories was plenty of advice, both technical and philosophical, for improving one's photography. He shoots almost exclusively in aperture priority, as depth of field is his main concern when composing a shot. His Nikon D300 is set with an auto white balance and focus is set to matrix mode. With the exception of

fog, which he overexposes a stop, Middleton habitually underexposes by 2/3 of a stop. He adopted this practice when he began the dairy farm project and was faced with the challenge of capturing proper exposure on the black and white dairy cattle on the farm.

When considering composition, Middleton says, "Ask yourself what it is you like about a scene and take that." He urged us to slow down and before we take any photos, pause and closely observe the scene. Be precise and concise about what we like, or "photograph a phrase". For example, I like the reflection of the trees, not I like the reflection of the trees and the angle of the sun and the shape of that branch and the color of the rocks, etc.

While the morning portion of the program was devoted to photography, the afternoon session focused on post-processing. Middleton emphasized that he is in no way an expert in photo editing—"if you're looking for technical expertise, I'm not your man"--and believes that the photographer should get the shot right in camera. He scorns current trends in editing—"HDR is Latin for the light sucks" and maintains a "three-minute rule" when editing photos. If it takes him longer than three minutes to edit a shot, there's something wrong with it and he discards it. Middleton's editing guideline is to take his photo to "ooh, and then back off a little". Since adopting Adobe Lightroom 2 as his primary editing tool, he states that he rarely uses Photoshop.

Middleton ended with advice for those who aspire to be published. He cautioned that unknown photographers will have no chance getting in the door at the major magazines like *Outdoor Photographer*, and thus should start with local and regional magazines, which are "dying for images". He encouraged us to pick a project, give ourselves an area of concentration, and work locally. He believes in developing themes and then submitting photos with an accompanying story, because for Middleton, it truly has become all about the story.

Competition Winners

October 2009



1st Place Assigned Color
No Worries
Tim Benoit



2nd Place Assigned Color
Safe at Third Base
Don Brooks



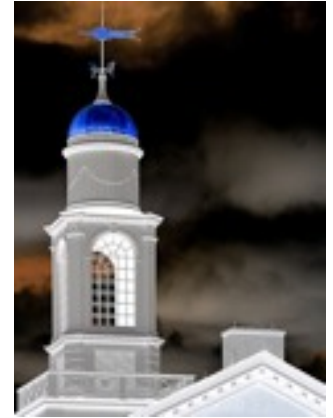
3rd Place Assigned Color
Bee On Coneflower
Anne Eigen



1st Place Open-Color
Aspens in Fall
Bob Berthier



2nd Place Open-Color
World's Most Photographed Farm
Don Brooks



3rd Place Open-Color
Blue Dome
Sheila Silvernail



1st Place Open-B & W
Milkweed After the Storm
Benay Yaffe



2nd Place Open-B & W
Frozen Cottonwoods
Bob Berthier



3rd Place Open-B & W
Silhouette
Donna White