HELPFUL HINTS

Competition judges provide a useful critique of members' prints and digital images. Here are some of the things we have learnt from them which we hope will help members in their quest to improve their techniques and outcomes.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Sharp focus! Making sure your picture is in sharp focus is vital (unless you are going for an intentional blurry look). If weighing up which to enter in a competition - a potentially great shot that is almost, but not quite in focus, or a pin sharp picture that may not be quite as exciting, always opt for the pin sharp image! You are unlikely to do well if the image is not in focus.
- It's a good idea to bear in mind the 'rule of thirds' when composing or cropping your image. Placing the main focal point on a point where the vertical and horizontal thirds cross generally creates a pleasing composition.
- Odd numbers - three or five, etc. tend to make a better composition than an even number of items. Bear this is mind, but photos can still be dramatic with two, four, six elements etc.
- Images need to have a standout appeal, often thought-provoking, i.e. what is going to happen next. Any story element is generally a plus.
- Titles can also be important and can help a judge understand what you were trying to convey in the image.
- Make use of shapes, tones and patterns as well as different angles to create more interesting images. Even black and white images should have a full range of tones, from white through to solid black
- Look out for extraneous items in images that might not be noticed at the time of taking the photo, i.e. any lens or dust spots, or a small item that may distract the viewer. It's generally easy to remove them using post-processing software.
- Be careful using white borders around an image as this can distract the eye from the image. If you want to use a border keep it narrow.

- Take care not to over-sharpen an image as this can create "noise" (i.e. speckling).

Remember – it's all about the light if you want to get it right.

PRINTS

- If you don't have a good quality photo printer, you can get excellent results from many online developers. DS Colour Labs (*www.dscolourlabs.co.uk*) offer a good range of print sizes with very quick delivery times and reasonable prices. However, there are plenty of others available.
- If printing your own, remember to consider the types of photo paper available. It's generally best to avoid high gloss as the reflective nature of the paper can make it difficult for the judge to see it properly. Safest to stick to Lustre or Matt.
- Mounts need to be 50cm x 40cm but your print can be any size within this. Mounts can be bought in a large sheet from numerous places including *The Range* and *HobbyCraft* but if you want a pre-cut 50x40 mount you can get these online from Paper Spectrum (*www.paperspectrum.co.uk*). Mounts that are pre-cut with the aperture for your photograph are also available if you are unsure about cutting your own.
- Always stick to white, cream or black for your mount. Coloured mounts are available but are generally not popular. Store mount boards flat.
- Be careful not to lose key elements of your print behind the mount frame.

Keep experimenting and don't be afraid to ask for help from other members

DIGITAL IMAGES

- You must resize your image for the club's projector to a maximum of 1920 pixels wide x 1200 pixels high.
- The area outside of your image will be projected as black, so if the image has dark edges it's a good idea to add a 'key line' so that it will be clear where the edges of your image are. The "key line" should be just 1-2 pixels wide in a lighter colour (e.g. grey or a colour that is reflected in the image) but don't make it too bright or dominant.
- Always try and avoid 'burnt out' areas which are where parts of the image are very bright and all detail is lost. The histogram on your processing software will show where an area is too bright. Just ask for advice if you're not sure!

- Words on images should only be used if relevant and not distracting.
- Look carefully at the image to check if the dark part should be lightened to provide more detail or if there are highlights that distract and should be toned down. Don't oversaturate.

Experiment with your camera and different software.

AUDIO-VISUAL

Some club members enjoy making and sharing audio-visual presentations and we occasionally have an evening for showing these. There are lots of software programmes available, from *Microsoft* to more comprehensive ones such as *PicturestoExe.* Anyone interested in developing their skills can get help and advice from other members.

GETTING HELP

- Please do not hesitate to ask for assistance. If you are fairly new to *Lightroom* or *Photoshop,* it can be a bit daunting at first. But there are plenty of people in the club who will be happy to help you get the hang of it and develop a work-flow when processing your images. Please ASK**!**
- There are some great *YouTube* tutorials online about virtually every aspect of *Lightroom* and *Photoshop* from absolute beginner to very experienced.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.dscolourlabs.co.uk
www.paperspectrum.co.uk
www.kcpa.co.uk (Kent County Photographic Association)

for new and second hand equipment:

www.canterburycameras.com
www.mpb.com
www.ffordes.com

YOUTUBE - Free Video Tutorials

Anthony Morganti
Piximperfect
Photoshop Training Channel

Photoshop Cafe
Tutvid
Glyn Dewis
DxO labs
Gimp Tutorials
Affinity Photo for Beginners
Capture One Livestreams

USEFUL BOOKS

There are plenty of books about photography still being produced. Here are a couple that will be useful to anyone new to photography:

The Digital Photography Handbook by Doug Harman
(Published by Quercus: www.quercusbooks.co.uk)

Read This If You Want To Take Great Photographs
by Henry Carroll
(Published by Laurence King Publishing Ltd: www.laurenceking.com)

The 4-weekly publication "*Photography News"* can be read online at www.photographynews.co.uk . This contains all the latest information about products and events. There is often a word-search and other free to enter competitions for a chance to win an item of photographic equpment.

IOTPS – Revised September 2023 -AGK.