

Kingston Photographic Club

Beginners

For those of you starting out in photography, try for two things...

1) Learn the basics. Understand the basics. Become well versed in the basics of how light is captured and presented in the digital realm and in print. Knowledge of the basics will allow you to create art you enjoy seeing.

2) Experiment. Don't be afraid to mess up. Don't bother asking others "What would happen if I forced a higher shutter speed?" Just do it and learn from it. The joy of experimenting with digital photography is instant feedback (via a camera's display and histogram) and hopefully instant understanding.... "When I do this, this happens." Photography, for all its glory as an art form, really isn't all that exciting from a discovery standpoint. It follows certain laws of physics in regard to what light does. From experimentation you'll know just how much darker your exposure will be if you increase my shutter speed two stops. It's not like I discovered a new species of plant in a rainforest or a new galaxy in the night sky. But it is still just as valuable from a learning standpoint.

There have always been classes, magazines and books to help people learn about photography - even to a very advanced level. In the days of film this was very helpful indeed because experimenting always had an out-of-pocket expense for film and development. In the age of digital photography, after the initial expense of a camera, lens and memory card, that barrier is gone and the learning is available everywhere.

Alongside all the learning, though, you will gain more from doing than from reading and this is where experimentation comes in. Want to see what a scene looks like overexposed? Go for it. Think a picture needs far more blue saturation when viewed on a PC? No problem. A shot might even 'speak' to you. And that is the heart of art. Connection with an image. Emotion stirred. If it works for you, don't worry too much what others, including those club competition judges, might think. It doesn't have to be a literal rendition of a scene nor does it need to be tack sharp in all corners. At some point in the future you will look back at shots you took one year or 50 years ago and they will either still speak to you or you will think they are horrible. "What was I thinking?" is a phrase often spoken with regard to photography, writing, fashion and haircuts. But without experimenting, without trying new things, without learning for yourself, you will not progress towards your own vision and creating art you enjoy. You will read over and over about what you 'should' do in photography - it comes from people who have done the experimentation and worked out the best solutions, so there is a great amount of learning to be had from those who have taken the time to learn and then offer their wisdom. This is why outings with club members can be so valuable as learning experiences. See how people set up their shots, understand the techniques of taking a shot while moving the camera, etc. See for yourself what happens when you (or another member) does certain things. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. They are a great teacher. Add a few clues from helpful colleagues (club members perhaps) and you'll be adding to your learning by taking leaps forward and not just little steps. Be prepared, though, to take your own path.