The IMAGE

View from the Boardroom

by Howard Margules

As you can see from this article, I wrote this while I was in a very philosophical mood, and if you are not, please forgive me. The good news is that it is short. So here goes.

With all of the advancements in photography and editing, it appears to me that the line between photography and other art forms has blurred significantly. In our club, we now forced to have a category called "enhanced "which to me looks very much like painting or perhaps other art forms. And on the other side of the coin, I just visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art where I saw paintings that looked more like photography than some of our images in our enhanced category. So is a camera just another tool, no different than a brush or is there still something unique in photography that justifies it as a distinct craft? I am not sure there is a right or wrong answerer. My own personal view is a lot of photography is now an extension of other art forms, and the camera can be viewed as another brush in the artist's tool box. I also think there are some categories of photography that are, for the most part, unique. These include a photojournalism, street photography and perhaps some nature images. You may add some others.

I guess we can assume that this trend toward the blurring of lines between photography and other art forms will probably accelerate as technology opens up new alternatives. Maybe we should continue to ask what makes photography unique, or is the question now no longer relevant. As a philosopher once said;" there are no answers just better questions." ❑

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MARCH ASSIGNMENT

This month we bring you the assignment of "ALL BUT ONE." This one is a little different than other assignments. Think of a birthday cake with ALL BUT ONE candle blownout. Have fun with this one, then up load them to your flickr account, and post the three best to the Coastal Camera Club's flickr group.

March Meetings

March 3, 2011

Kathy Katz will give a presentation on "Photographing India"

March 16, 2011

NECCC Nature Slide Circuit, A judged show of work from 6-8 camera clubs with comments by a NECCC judge on each image. **Informal one on one critique at 6:30 pm.**

NEED MORE INFORMATION, TRY LOOKING IN ONE OF THESE PLACES:

If you need something, you can probably find it on the Internet. You just need to know where to look. For Coastal Camera Club information, please try these sites:

www.coastalcameraclub.org - the official club website
www.coastalcameraclub.wordpress.com - club blog
public.me.com/lou.secki - site to download club files

FEBRUARY REFRESHMENTS:

March 3, 2011 .....Maryann Flick
March 16, 2011 .....Shawn O'Sullivan

Follow these rules when submitting any image to the Coastal Camera Club:

Files must be named using the following format:

X#$Coastal$LastName$FistName$ImageTittle$YYYY-MM.jpg

Where X=the type of file (**O**pen, **C**reative, **B**lack&White, etc) and YYYY-MM is the year and month of the event you were submitting the file for. For example, O2$Coastal$Smith$John$The Red Barn$2011-01, this is an image titled *The Red Barn* by John Smith of the Coastal Camera Club to be submitted to a competition in January of 2011.

Images must be submitted to ccc.images@gmail.com with the subject line indicating the event for which you are submitting.

If you have any questions, please contact Lou Secki at lou.secki@gmail.com.

The Coastal Camera Club meets at 7:00pm on the first Thursday and the third Wednesday of the month at The Meeting Room in the Madison Police Station located at 9 Campus Drive in Madison, Connecticut.

JOINT COMPETITION WITH THE SOUTHEASTERN CAMERA CLUB

The join competition in April is right around the corner so it's time to get ready. Since we are going to play at their house this year we have to play by their rules. I am going to hit the highlights here but you are more than welcome to download the entire competition rules as well as the competition entry form from my MobileMe account:

Rules: files.me.com/lou.secki/yoojyr

Form: files.me.com/lou.secki/baoekc

Categories:

- Prints - Pictorial: Any Subject Matter, Any Printing Method and Any Computer Manipulation Accepted.
- Prints - Black & White: Just like the Prints Pictorial category, just in B&W.
- Prints – Nature: No Hand Of Man, can be color or B&W.
- Prints - Special Category: Color or B&W, Only One Image Per Maker – "Shadows"
- Projected Digital – Pictorial: Color or B&W, Any Subject Matter, Any Digital Manipulation
- Projected Digital – Nature: No Hand Of Man, Color or B&W
- Projected Digital – Special Category: Color or B&W, Only One Image Per Maker – "Light"

The SECC allows two images/ maker for each category except the special categories, only one image/ maker for those.

Images must have been taken within the past three years.

Images cannot have been used in a previous joint competition but if they were used in one of our competitions that is fine.

Maximum size for images is 1024 by 768 pixels

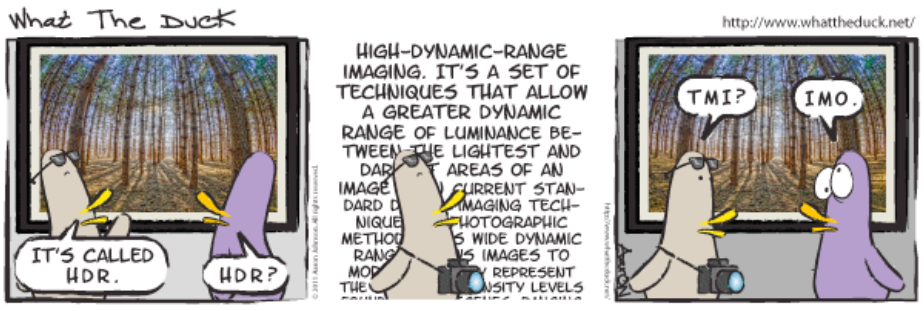
File Naming is a little different than ours but again its very important to name the files correctly.

P#2$Southeastern CT Camera Club$LastName, First Name$Title.jpg

The first letter will be a "P" for pictorial, "N" for nature or "S" for special

For our club I would suggest we substitute "Coastal" for "Southeastern CT."

If you have any questions just ask. ❑



GLENNIE NATURE COMPETITION

It's that time of year again: I am looking for the best nature images for the Glennie Nature Competition. For those who don't know, the Glennie Competition is a world-wide, digital nature competition hosted by the Merrimack Valley Camera Club in North Andover, MA. Last year they had 111 clubs from 7 counties participate. If you have a great nature image you would like us to consider for use as an entry from our club, please send it to ccc.images@gmail.com with "Glennie" in the subject line. For information regarding the rules please visit www.mvcameraclub.org.

TIDBITS #69 - HISTOGRAMS

By Archie Stone

What is a histogram and why do we even need it?

A histogram is a simple bar graph representation of the exposure of a unique digital image captured by the camera sensor. It records the data as a tonality (black and white) or color brightness (color image). Tonality is simple to understand. Just think of Ansel Adams' "Zone System" of ten shades starting with pure black on the left and pure white on the right and eight gradations of black, gray and white in the middle. The only difference is the sensor captures hundreds or thousands of different shades of blacks, grays and whites. Color Brightness, on the other hand. is a little harder to understand. It is not the color but how saturated the color is. Let's take red as an example. We can have a deep dark red which will record as a dark color brightness on the left of the histogram. If dark and saturated enough it may well record the same as black. Or, we can have a light, almost white; washed-out pastel red which will record as a very light tonality on the right of the histogram, the same as some whites may record. Both are red, but due to how saturated or unsaturated the color is, they record on different parts of the histogram. The rest of the reds will then fall in between.

The histogram you see on the camera is from a JPEG image, as is the image on the LCD screen. This is true even if you are shooting in RAW.

The X or vertical axis in the graph represents the number of pixels containing a given color brightness or tonality on the sensor. This is a representation only as to show a true pixel count and the total tonalities would be physically impossible, as the average sensor today contains over 10 million pixels and captures hundreds to thousands of different tones. What can be said is that the columns are a ratio so that a color brightness found in 1000 pixels will be ten times higher than a color brightness found in 100 pixels. As the X axis is only a count of pixels we do not need to worry if it extends up to the top of the graph, and in fact, if there are numerous pixels containing the same tonality they are cut off at the top so even the ratios may not be fairly represented.

The Y or horizontal axis is divided into 256 columns, each representing a tonality. These columns are numbered 0 through 255 with 0 on the left of the graph representing black with no detail and 255 on the right representing white with no detail. Mid tone or 18% gray is at the center of the graph in position number 128. Unlike the X axis where we do not care if the line goes up to the top of the graph, we do have to worry about the Y axis hitting the left and right edges.

For those into trivia, why are these 256 columns on the Y axis? Because an 8 bit JPEG file has 256 tonalities. More trivia and the reason to shoot in RAW: A 12 bit Raw file has 4,096, a 14 bit has 16,384 and a 16 bit has 65,536 tonalities, which gives you more data to manipulate before you will see degradation in an image.

If the pixel columns (X value) are all the way to the left of the graph on the Y axis and "climb the wall," then we are capturing black that either has no detail or is so under-exposed there was no detail captured by the sensor and therefore nothing to use in projecting the image or to bring out in making the print. The same can be said for a histogram where the pixel columns extend all the way to the right edge of the Y axis and "climb the wall," as that portion of the image either has no detail or is so over-exposed it will contain no detail

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TIDBITS #69 - HISTOGRAMS, CONTINUED

and thus leave nothing to use in projecting the image or to bring out in making the print.

Is "climbing the wall" necessarily bad? That depends on the image you are trying to capture. If the scene does contain blacks or whites that are so black or so white as to contain no detail, then a correct exposure may give a histogram with the Y axis "climbing the wall." What can be said is that if you do have a histogram "climbing the wall" on the left or right, you will then have a print with black or white with no detail.

The histogram gives us a representation of the exposure of an image as captured by the sensor. It is then up to the photographer to decide, given the image, whether this is a proper exposure or not. The histogram will allow the photographer to fine-tune the exposure or to give a bias to over- or under-exposure.

A histogram without the image to compare it to is of no use to the photographer. Why is this true? If you are photographing the inside of the black hood worn by the nasty witch, you will have a histogram that will fall for the most part to the left of mid-tone and will also have the Y axis "climbing the wall" on the left. This is because some of the image will be black with no detail, and the rest of the image will be shades of black and dark gray but contain detail. Conversely if you are photographing Snow White's white gown you will have a histogram that will fall for the most part to the right of mid-tone and will also have the Y axis "climbing the wall" on the right. This is because some of the image will be white with no detail and the rest of the image will be shades of white and light gray but contain detail. If you saw the two histograms without the image, you may think that one was from an under-exposed subject and the other from an over-exposed subject.

When photographing in JPEG mode, you need to capture the image as given or how you want it to be projected or printed. This is because the image is processed (developed) in-camera. If the scene you are capturing is average or contains an equal amount of blacks (darks) and whites (lights), you should try and center the histogram in the middle of the Y axis of the graph. If a scene is contrasty, then you may favor adjusting the exposure towards the white end of the graph without climbing the right wall. This will give you as much detail in the blacks as possible but not blow out the whites. Remember, though, when shooting in JPEG, you need to favor the whites and have detail as we are willing to accept black with no detail, such as dark shadows, but do not like to see images with blown-out whites.

When shooting in RAW you need to move the histogram as far to the right as you can, given the image, without climbing the right wall so as to gather as much detail as possible in the blacks. You do this as all of the image processing is done on the computer, and you need as much data as possible throughout the image to work with.

The histogram can also be used to check Dynamic Range, or the ability of the sensor to capture all of the data in the image. Digital cameras have a Dynamic Range that falls between slide and print film. Most articles I have read give the

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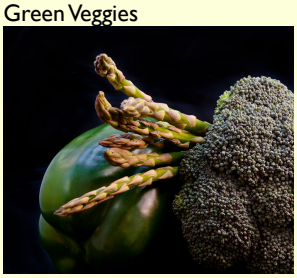
Here are a few of the submissions we had on Flickr last month for the "Food" assignment

Macarons

Chocolate Peanut Butter Deliciousness

Green Veggies



Color Reflection-2

Garlic

TECH CORNER - MEMORY CARDS

An interesting question came up at a recent meeting, and it was the sort of question that will benefit all of our members. The question had to do with memory cards. The shooter was using several SD cards and swapping them between cameras. The problem she found was that when a card was in Camera A, the display would show the images just fine, however when that same card was removed from Camera A and placed in Camera B, none of the images would come up on the LCD screen. Here is where things got really strange: When the card was put back into Camera A, the images were there and could be viewed on the LCD screen again.

I don't want anyone to panic. This is not going to be another sermon from the Church of Digital Back-ups. I have preached on that topic many times in the past, so I will spare you this time. This sermon will be more about card management: how to take care of them, how to use them, how to protect your data and basically how to make sure you get the most out of your cards. Since you presumably want to keep the images you took, it would be a shame if they were lost due to card neglect.

Memory cards are very reliable for the most part. If you don't drop them in to a mud puddle or leave them in your pocket when you wash your pants, they will more than likely perform very well for many years. I currently have four 2GB cards that I shoot with, and they are probably four years old at this point. I have never lost an image due to card failure. There are several things I do to make sure my cards work well:

- Protect Your Cards
  When my cards are not in the camera, they are in a case. The case I use is sealed against moisture and dust. In fact, this case will even float if dropped into water. No, I have not tried this. Some of the cases on the market will even protect against electrostatic charges.

- Have a System
  Fresh cards that are ready to use go into the case face-up, and used cards with pictures on them go in face-down. This way I never have a question in my mind as to the status of the card. When I need a new card, I just grab one that is face-up.

- Reformat Every Time
  Before I shoot any pictures, I reformat the fresh card. Formatting cards in your camera is a great way to

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TIDBITS #69 - HISTOGRAMS, CONTINUED

Dynamic Range at about 7 or 8 stops of light, which is not much better than slide film's 3 to 5 stops. What this means to all you old print film shooters is that you are going to have to work on getting the exposure right or you will be unhappy with your images. Lately it would seem the camera manufacturers are now trying to expand the Dynamic Range of the sensors.

If the histogram covers the full range of the graph without "climbing the wall" at either end then the sensor's dynamic range was great enough to capture the image with no loss of detail. If, though, the histogram covers the full range of the Y axis of the graph and then climbs either the left or right wall or both, then the dynamic range of the sensor is not enough to cover the contrast range of the image and you will have areas of black or white or both that contain no detail. You then have two choices: one, to mount your camera on a tripod and, using High Dynamic Range technique, take a series of images, starting with over-exposing the highlights, which will bring the darks and shadows into the dynamic range of the sensor, and then change the exposure towards under-exposure until you have brought the highlights inside the dynamic range. Then, using HDR software, merge the images on the computer. Or! You reach into the

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WORKING THE SUBJECT PROGRAM

Wednesday, May 18, 2011

Instead of our usual Scavenger Hunt we have come up with the "Working the Subject" project. What each club member is to do is to find one object or one scene and photograph it in as many ways as you can. We will then ask you to review all of the images you took, it should be in the hundreds if you really work at it, and then select the five best images. These images will be presented in as a separate program on Wednesday, May 18, 2011.

Each maker**, if they desire**, may give a 3- 5 minute talk about the images, or how they went about the project or what they learned in doing it.

The five images need to be sent by e-mail to ccc.images@gmail.com by Thursday, May 5, 2011 with the subject line "working the subject."

TIDBITS #69 - HISTOGRAMS, CONTINUED

camera bag and grab the split neutral density filter and use it to bring the contrast range back into what the sensor's Dynamic Range can capture.

The histogram will tell you if you have a high-contrast or low-contrast image. A high-contrast image will be spread out over the full length or most of the length of the Y axis. A low-contrast image will be bunched together on the Y axis leaving room at one or both ends. If it is biased to the left, black end of the graph, then you have a Low Key or under-exposed image. If it is biased to the right, white end of the graph, then you have a high key or over-exposed image. It is up to the photographer to decide, by looking at the scene you just photographed or the image on the LCD panel, which it is. If it is under- or over-exposed, then adjust the camera settings and try again. I use this to fine-tune my exposures or to bracket the exposure so that when I get it on the computer I have a number of slightly different exposures to choose from.

Most digital cameras have a histogram. You can find out how to bring it up on the LCD screen by reading the histogram section of your camera manual. The camera will also give you the choice of a "luminous" histogram or a Red, Green, Blue histogram. The luminous histogram is a weighted average of the RGB pixels and is usually depicted as black on the bar graph. The RGB histogram shows the distribution of each color either as three separate graphs or one graph with the colors overlaying each other. While the RGB histogram gives a more accurate exposure reading, I find that, in the field, it is too much information, so I have my cameras set to the luminous histogram. In processing the images on the computer though, I would use the RGB histogram.

If you find you are constantly correcting your exposure in the same direction and by the same amount, you may have a metering problem. I had this on my Canon G5 point and shoot and solved the over-exposure problem by permanently setting a 1/3rd stop under-exposure using my exposure compensation setting. To make this determination I used my histogram to shoot a sequence of images starting at 2/3rd under-exposed up to 2/3rd over-exposed in 1/3rd stops. After viewing the images on the computer I determined that I liked the exposure I was getting from the 1/3rd stop under-exposure best.

While this article will get you started on the right track in using your histogram you will need to practice reading the graph while looking at the image in order to make it work.

More readings:

www.dpreview.com/glossary Look up *histogram*.

www.digitaldarrell.com/Article-UnderstandingYourDigitalCameraHistogram.asp

www.google.com Search topic "articles on digital camera histogram."

www.lexar.com Has a list of free tutorials.

TECH CORNER - MEMORY CARDS, CONTINUED

keep the card working like new.

If you constantly take pictures, transfer them to your computer, then delete them one by one, then take more pictures and transfer those to your computer, then delete them, lather, rinse, repeat….. you are only asking for trouble. Reformatting your cards is like giving them a good scrubbing. They are clean and fresh and ready to go. Deleting images one by one is not only time consuming, but it can leave clutter and file fragments on your cards.

Reformatting the card in your camera also preps that card for use in that camera. Sharing cards between cameras can be risky if you don't reformat them every time. Even cameras from the same manufacturer, even the same model, can be tricky.

I hope this helps you keep your cards working well. When you are out shooting, you need to be thinking about the actual shooting and not about your memory cards. If you have any questions, you can send them to lou.secki@gmail.com.

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