TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY; TALKING ABOUT

EVERYTHING (GENERAL COMMENTARY)

FROM THE jbhphoto.com BLOG

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MUSINGS, OPINIONS, COMMENTARY, HOW-TO AND GENERAL DISCUSSION ABOUT TRADITIONAL WET DARKROOM PHOTOGRAPHY TAKEN FROM THE PAGES OF THE jbhphoto.com BLOG.

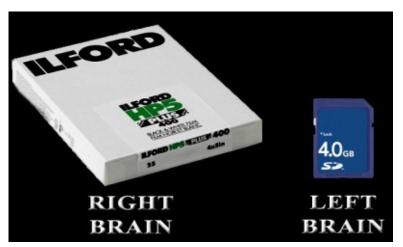
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WHEN WILL YOU GIVE UP FILM PHOTOGRAPHY?

This entry was posted on September 24, 2012.



This is an interesting question that comes up all the time and seems to keep reoccurring. When will you give up film photography and move to digital, is something that is asked of me from time to time? My answer has been consistent since digital photography moved into the mainstream. Personally, my answer is, "I will give up photography completely if I have to go digital." Plain and simple. . . I will never be able to create serious art with a computer.

My entire life has been spent in and around the electronics world. I began using a computer when the first Commodore Vic 20 hit the market. I had to learn computing in order to stay current in the engineering world. I see a computer as an engineering tool. It is not a toy, not a game machine, not a source of entertainment. It is a tool for designing complex machines and circuits. . . for navigating to the moon, and the stars. One thing is certain for me, it is not a device for creating my art.

I use a computer for work; I use it to write; I use it to access the Internet; I use it to communicate with others; I use it to update my BLOG; and I use it to host a web site. These to me are not artistic endeavors.

In my mind, a computer is not where I go to express myself visually. It is not where I go to create my art. In front of a monitor I am in a working mindset, mostly thinking in left brain mode. Creativity requires a catalyst. Only out in the field with my camera under the dark cloth, or in the darkroom does my mind really shift into right brain 'creative' mode. It is impossible for me to think in an artistic manner when clicking a mouse and looking at a monitor.

I know I have written about this before, but the same question keeps coming up, and my feeling about the subject does not change. This is how I work and how I think. The creation of art is a very personal thing and requires you think in a particular way. For me, I can only create when I am in the proper environment, and cyberspace is not the proper environment for me.

So, if that day comes when there is no other alternative than to twiddle bits, and if I am still around, I will have to give up my passion for photography. I will just have to find contentment and enjoy the art that I have created, and know that there will never be anything like it again. I have spent a lifetime refining my technique. Take a close look at my prints and maybe you will see a glimmer of what I have spent so much time fine tuning to suit only me. I feel very fortunate to have lived in a time where I could participate in such a beautiful medium. Personally, I have no interest in learning anything new. There will never be a replacement for traditional photography!

THE VIEW OUT MY WINDOW SYNDROME

This entry was posted on February 5, 2011.



I have struggled for years to understand the concept of what is visually stimulating. Just exactly what does it take to strike a nerve that leads to the successful completion of an expressive photograph? Specifically, why is it that I cannot easily find something in my immediate environment that I find worthy of photographing? There was a time when I really thought there was something wrong with my perception of my surroundings. Edward Weston said something to the effect that, you should be able to look down at your feet and find something interesting to photograph. Doesn't always work for me.

The trouble is, I have a difficult time finding anything within my local surroundings that excites me very much. Some of this has to do with the fact that I live

on a flat coastal plane at 600 feet above sea level and what I like the most is mountains and snow. I just can't seem to find barb wire fences to the horizon, hay rolls, or wind mills that interesting.

I used to think this was only a personal mental issue that I alone suffered from, and that I was in some way creatively impaired. I thought that all I needed to do was find some magic somewhere that would allow me to visually connect to what I see every day. There were those times that I was able to find visual stimulation. Such as dense fog, or really interesting clouds, or maybe a rare snow storm. But most of the time I found that I was forcing myself to just get out and that what I created was not something I really cared for. So, why bother?

As I began to associate with other photographers, many living in other areas of the country, what I found was surprising. I met and talked with people that live in some of what I feel are the most visually stimulating places on the earth. To my dismay some of them have no interest whatsoever in even visiting, let alone photographing what I would give near anything to have unlimited access to. I have talked to people that have grown up within a few hours drive of these places and have never visited, let alone ever had even considered to take a look, let alone make a serious photograph of what lay literally in their back yard.

I began to realize that I was not alone when it came to finding inspiration and visual excitement within my immediate environment. I began to think more in terms that this is a normal 'thing'... a 'syndrome'... a 'phobia'... or whatever, that many other suffer from, or in some way deal with, also.

I am a big fan of the late Bill Jay. His writing on photography is classic. I found this excerpt from one of his most popular pieces and it seemed to connect to my thoughts about this perplexing condition;

"... in order to photograph with any degree of continuous passion, you must have a fascination for the subject, otherwise you cannot sustain an interest in the act of creation for a long enough period of time in which to make any insightful or original statement about it." 1

Thank you Bill Jay!

I have now accepted my condition and even dredged up a name for this phenomenon. I call it, "The View Out My Window Syndrome." There seems to be something about what you have seen every day of your life and how visually exciting that view becomes over your lifetime. At least for some of us, this is some sort of syndrome. The question is, what can you do about it?

I have come to believe that there is little you can do about The View Out My Window Syndrome... so you just live with it. Maybe it is more important to accept it and not obsess over something you have little control over. Make it your goal to find and photograph whatever excites you and do not bother with what lay outside your window, especially if it does not excite you!

I started working on this post some time back and have now returned to complete my thoughts. We have had an unusual winter storm here in Texas. We are on the fourth day of cold, ice, and snow. Today we just had another 2-3 inches of new snow. This is the kind of weather we love when we are out in our favorite areas. . . in the mountains or the visually stunning S/W. Yet with all of this nice cold and snow I have little to no interest in dragging a camera out. The back yard is as boring as the back of my hand. I cannot think of any place near by that I would risk driving to that would be visually exciting, even with a gorgeous coating of snow. Maybe if I did get out I could find something, but I really have no inclination to risk being ran over by some idiot driving on ice. When in the mountains or the desert S/W I don't mind driving 40-50 miles on solid ice to shoot some film. Here, I don't even want to walk to the mail box. Why? Good question, but this is an example of a bad case of "The View Out My Window Syndrome."

JB

1 "The Thing Itself; The fundamental principle of photography" First published in Newsletter, Daytona Beach Community College, 1988 http://www.billiayonphotography.com

ORIGINALLY POSTED ON OUR OLD BLOG; Saturday, January 17, 2009

This entry was posted on February 20, 2011.

NOTE: This post originally appeared on our first <u>BLOG</u> that is no longer active. I am resurrecting it here because it is something I feel needs to be repeated. Just another one of my little rants about the state of affairs pertaining to my favorite subject. . . Photography. To be even more specific. . . Film Photography. Take my comments with a grain of salt. . . or. . . maybe more like rubbing salt in your eyes????

WHERE HAVE ALL THE PHOTOGRAPHY CLUBS GONE?



To answer that question, they have turned into Computer Clubs! Why? I really do not know why, but I have an idea.

People in general are consumer driven by what the large manufacturers say and do. Certain large, should I say behemoth, manufacturers have taken the initiative to try and influence the photographic market place. Corporate bean counters are forever trying to enhance the bottom line. These so called Harvard MBA's have little to no experience in reality, they just look to their book learning and spread sheets for bigger, better, faster. They are paid to find pie-in-the-sky schemes that look good for the bottom line. They know little about the product nor its users. And, they really don't care about anything beyond the quarterly report to the board and share holders. This mindset has filtered into the film photography industry. They don't care about their product nor their customers

beyond what they can get from either or both. Hence the battle cry "Film Is Dead" has gone out through the photography world because someone thinks that is where they can make the most money. And, people, sadly most people, follow like sheep. Repeating the call and believing it is true.

How many times have I been asked, "where do you get film for that camera?" This gets really old in a hurry, but the reality is, people are just misinformed. Way too much TV, radio, magazine ads, billboards, newspapers, Internet, etc, for anyone's good. We, as a society, are pounded day and night with endless advertising. And, sadly, we believe it! "We couldn't say it on TV if it wasn't true" is something I hear on some infomercial. Remember, advertisers will tell you anything to get your money!

OK, so what does this have to do with the Camera/Computer Club? It seems that they have become one of the sources for the misconception of the Film Is Dead hoax. Go to most any club, bring up film,

and you will be instantly told there is no such thing. It is not that they are trying to intentionally mislead, they are just misinformed. They have bought into the hoax, because it is what they have heard somewhere. And what ticks me off is the fact that they continue to spread false information.

My wife and myself in the past were involved with camera clubs. Why? Because it was a place to meet like-minded individuals and share our interests. Several years ago we found that more and more we had little in common with the other members. They were speaking in tongues, discussing materials and equipment we knew nothing about and had no interest in learning. You can say we lost that 'like mindedness.' We cease to be interested and are no longer members.

So, why should this bother me? Because misinformation is detrimental to creativity and the art of photography. I really don't care if you shoot digital. It is simple; Digital Is Its Own Art Form! Acrylic paint did not replace oil for the painter. In this modern age, people still use candles, hand write letters, ride horses, and who knows what else that has evolved into some more up-to-the-minute technology. Why this all-out move to kill film photography and to try and convince anyone interested that digital is the only choice?

What bothers me is the fact that clubs preach from the rafters the falsehood that film is gone. What if someone wanting to express their artistic vision joins a camera club to learn the craft? They are told film is no longer manufactured, not available, don't bother. Then they spend their time and money working with digital only to learn later that film is still alive and possibly more important, the direction more suitable to their vision. Film is another medium for their expression. They have now wasted valuable time and resources exploring a medium that is not suitable to their creativity.

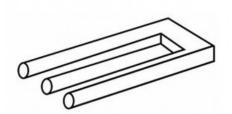
A good club, at least for me, would foster all forms of photography, from digital, to the most extreme alternative processes. That way those interested in the medium could see what is really available and make the choice as to which process is right for them. The world is not a one-size-fits-all society.

Creative people have something to say. They may write, sculpt, paint or photograph. What is important to the beginner is that they see what their options are, so they can make an intelligent choice. No one should be funneled down the wrong path just because the local Computer Club feeds them a line of BS based on a hoax. If you are just starting out in photography, be very careful if you choose to start with a Camera Club! It could just cost you the most valuable commodity you have... TIME!!!

And, to those that are in charge of the local camera clubs, pull your head out of the sand and look around. There is an entire world of photographic imaging, from digital to exotic alternative processes where you create your own emulsions. You just have to look for it somewhere beyond the narrow minded Hoax of Film Is Dead. Please, don't tell the next new person that comes to a meeting that digital is the only game in town!!!

TALKING OF PHOTOGRAPHS

This entry was posted on March 23, 2010.



I keep harping on the idea that photography is about the photograph and not the equipment. Or, at least, that is the direction I prefer to take when it comes to the discussion of photography. Talking shop about the gear is the easy part. Talking about the photograph, and the makeup of an image is much more difficult.

The reason the hardware is much easier to discuss is because it is a real, tangible thing. A piece of hardware you can pick up and hold

it in your hand. It has a name and a specific function. You can learn to use a piece of equipment. Most everything about it is well defined and it works in a particular way.

What makes up art is something that is only a feeling. You either like what you see, or you don't. Looking at some images triggers a feeling or memory that touches you deeply, but cannot be expressed with words. What is definitely appealing to one person is completely ignored by another. To express a great piece of art in words mostly detracts from its emotional content. You just can't explain a great image.

I am much more interested in hearing how a person was attracted to something, which in turn led them to be motivated to make the photo, rather than the f-stop and shutter speed they used. There are those times when you just KNOW it is time to expose film. The question is, how do you know?

This is the hardest part of artistic photography. There are those that have attempted to explain what is pleasing to the eye by lowering themselves to a form of art speak. Stringing big words together does nothing but make a lot of squiggly lines on paper. Talking for the sake of talk and saying nothing, is what politicians base their careers on.

I am interested in understanding the thought process, but some things are just not well suited for words. Sometimes it is best to just look and enjoy. Below are a few interesting quotes from David Vestal.

"When you must use words, use plain, clear ones that say exactly what you mean. That's hard. Art jargon is easy but it only impresses fools. It turns intelligent people off and tells them that the jargon-user is a fool."

"Pompous wall labels that explain how your work transcends everything usually fool only curators and collectors."

"Such instructions don't work. People will see your work as they are ready to see it and no better, no matter how wonderful you tell them it is."

JB

Photo Techniques Advanced B&W Printing Photos 303, The Pratt Institute Handouts by David Vestal

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

This entry was posted on October 17, 2010.

name [neym] (noun)

1. a word or a combination of words by which a person, place, or thing, a body or class, or any object of thought is designated, called, or known.

TRADITIONAL SILVER GELATIN PHOTOGRAPH

What is in a name? Interesting question for sure! There are times that a name has little meaning, other times it can be the key to an empire. Companies spend untold sums of money in the creation of a name for their products. Their chosen names are trademarked and protected by law. Some names are household words and are part of our everyday life. There are times when a name is extremely important.

There is a revolution brewing in the world of photographic art. The digital vs. analog debate is raging on, and at times is near a

war rather than a debate. There are people aligned on both sides and most have made their choice. I can say without hesitation that I have made my decision and I plan to stay the course. It matters not what your preference may be as to the photographic medium you choose. The choice is a very personal and serious decision. You need to be comfortable with your selection and dedicated to its use.

The problem is there needs to be a clarification of terms used in photography today. The various forms that photography has taken on in these more modern times has lead to a lot of misunderstanding and confusion. The general public, along with even those in the fine art photography world, have trouble understanding and defining exactly what modern-day photography has become.

There is this grand misnomer that digital is a replacement for film. There was even a wide spread rumor that film was dead. This is nothing but a pure deception... little more than a marketing ploy by people in the photo industry that do not have a clue as to what photographic art is about. Do not buy into the farce that film is dead.

But I digress from my original topic. . . now back to the question at hand. What we need is to be more specific about photographic art. Gone are the days that the word photograph was assumed to mean a procedure based on film and the wet process. Photography has branched out into a more complex art form. Digital photography is a new art form, not a replacement. It is a new way of making images. Because of this new medium there is a lot of confusion



pertaining to the process. Each medium has its own peculiarities, strengths, and weaknesses... each needs a name. We need to be more specific in the description of the imaging process. After much thought, I have defined three areas that encompass photography today.

1. Traditional Photography

This process has numerous subcategories which are all based on an imaging process that uses film, a wet darkroom, and chemical processes from start to finish. Simply, the way photographs were made before the introduction of digital imaging. This also includes the numerous alternative processes that are still practiced today. This is my choice for the creation of all of my photographs, thus for me using film and the 100% wet darkroom process, my finished print on gelatin silver paper, would be identified as a *Traditional Silver Gelatin Photograph*.

2. Hybrid Photography

This process is new and is comprised of those that mix traditional and digital together. Some choose to shoot film and then use digital means for the finished product. There are also processes that incorporate digital means to produce a negative that is ultimately used for a wet processed product. This is a very popular art form today and it needs its own definition. . . hence, the term Hybrid. For example, if you are a platinum printer that uses digital negatives, your print should be labeled *Hybrid Platinum Photograph*.

3. Digital Photography

This is pure digital from start to finish. A digital camera is used to capture the image, computers are used for post processing, and a digital printer is used for the finished product. A Digital photograph is 100% digital in its creation from start to finish. If you work in this medium and use an inkjet printer the print should be labeled a *Digital Inkjet Photograph*.

This is how I choose to define photography in the modern world. There are three distinct categories of imaging and each should be properly defined. It should be obvious as to which art form I practice. From now on when asked, I will say I am a Traditional Photographer and my prints will be labeled Traditional Silver Gelatin Photograph. Just that simple!

This is my choice and has absolutely nothing to do with anything other than it is what I feel correctly reflects the different types of photography. If you have chosen to be a digital photographer and work in that medium, why be ashamed of it? Same if your work is produced by the hybrid method. Why not be proud enough of your chosen medium to accurately define it and not hide behind the general,

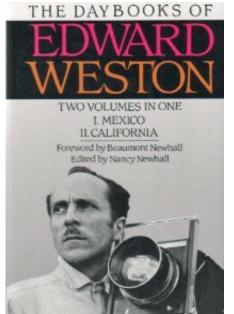
and now somewhat vague, idiom of Photography? Just keep in mind that none of these three categories are the same and none is a replacement for any of the others. Each is simply its own art form and they all fall under the general category of Photography.

So, what is in a name? What you call something can mean a lot, especially when you are trying to define your craft. What is your choice. . . TRADITIONAL. . . HYBRID. . . DIGITAL. . . or. . . some combination of the above? Doesn't matter, just define your chosen medium accurately.

"DIFFERENT IS NOT THE SAME" -Fred Picker-

EDWARD WESTON AND HIS DAYBOOKS

This entry was posted on July 3, 2013.



Have you ever wondered what the life of an artist would be like? Edward Weston was not only an artist, he was obsessed by his art. Every day before everyone else was awake, Edward would write in his Daybook. His journal has become a classic of photographic literature. At one point he destroyed some of his daybooks, but those that remained were eventually transcribed and published.

Weston was a towering figure in twentieth-century photography, whose restless quest for beauty and the mystical presence behind it resulted in a body of work unrivaled in the medium. John Szarkowski observes that "It was as though the things of everyday experience had been transformed... into organic sculptures, the forms of which were both the expression and the justification of the life within... He had freed his eyes of conventional expectation, and had taught them to see the statement of intent that resides in natural form."

This is a fascinating and informative read. A look into the life of a dedicated artist. If you are serious about your photography... if you think you are serious about your photography... read "The Daybooks of Edward Weston" and see how you compare.

WHO MADE THAT WRENCH?

This entry was posted on March 14, 2010.



I heard, or maybe read somewhere, that "Amateur photographers talk about equipment. . . Serious photographers talk about photographs!" Personally, I am much more interested in photographs than cameras. A camera is just a light-tight box that holds the lens and film.

Certainly it is important to have the proper tools in order to be successful at anything you attempt. Matters not whether you are building a bookcase, fixing a leaky kitchen faucet or making a photograph. But to obsess endlessly over your tool belt is not

necessary. Think of it this way. You take your dream vacation to some really far away place you have always dreamed of visiting. Would you come back and tell everyone all of the details of where you visited, or would you go into excessive detail about the airplane that flew you there?

I defy anyone to look at a framed photograph hanging on the wall and tell me the camera, lens, film, or paper that was used. You would have to be a mind reader! Is the equipment necessary? Certainly! But equipment is only an apparatus necessary to reach an end. The camera is a tool, no more, nor no less, important than a wrench. All you really care about is that faucet in the kitchen stops dripping. Do you care about the name on that wrench?

What I care about is the finished photo on the wall... well... I have to admit that being out in the field searching for something to point the camera toward is also very important. But everything that goes on between those two moments is really of little interest to me, other than I having what I need to bridge the gap.

What I am trying to say is, spend more time with the image and stop obsessing over the hardware. Buy the best equipment you can afford and work at wearing it out making photos, not wearing yourself, and everyone else, out talking about the paraphernalia.

f8 & Be There

This entry was posted on September 14, 2009.



A friend e-mailed me the other day saying there was an interesting discussion about the quote "f8 & Be There" supposedly credited to Weegee, a.k.a. Arthur Fellig (June 12, 1899 – December 26, 1968) going around on the Internet. I have my interpretation of this quote, and it requires little thought on my part to understand what it means to me. But I guess in this modern day computerized world of digital everything, so called "photographers" have lost a connection to the basic craft of dedication, exposure and artistic vision?

The world we live in today is far too complicated. Made so by all of the choices and distractions we face every

waking hour. One of the first real realizations of maturity is to realize you can never Have It All! You will never live long enough! You have to make choices as to what is important. You have to pick and choose what you really want and then stick to it. You cannot be an astronaut, a brain surgeon, a rock star, a movie star, and on, and on... Trying to Have It All, will only lead you to ruin. Having it all is an advertiser's myth, created to sell you soap, cars, windows, insulation, ocean cruises, and imagined happiness.

So, what does "f8 & Be There" mean to me? Pretty simple. . . for me it is a term pertaining to photography and simply means if you want to be a photographer you have to make the decision a conscious choice.

- Turn off the computer
- Turn off the TV
- Turn off the cell phone
- Turn off texting
- Turn off the obsessions. . . sports, soap operas, talk shows, music videos, lame network prime time shows. . .
- Remove all distractions...
- Flush all of the clutter from your life

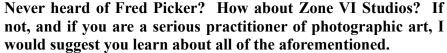
What "f8 & Be There" means to me is, if you really want to be a photographer, you have to dedicate yourself to photography. Forsaking all other interests to get out there and be a photographer with all you have to give to the medium. "f8 & Be There" means dedication and focus on one, and only one passion, your photography. You have to really want to, not just kind of want to. That choice is yours, but remember whatever you choose, you can never Have It All.

If you really want a glimpse of what dedication to your passion entails, read "The Daybooks" by Edward Weston. Passion to the point of starvation was the dedication this man gave to his art.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF FRED PICKER?

This entry was posted on January 29, 2009.







Fred Picker originally was a commercial photographer that developed a one-of-a-kind photographic specialties business in Vermont. Zone VI Studios manufactured and sold view cameras, B&W darkroom supplies and custom built equipment. Sadly Fred sold Zone VI to Calumet Photographic in the 1990's.

He stayed on for a few years and finally retired completely. Calumet has slowly phased out Zone VI products and they are now relegated to only being available used. Sadly Fred died in 2002. This was a great loss to the photographic community.

One of the best things that Fred left for all of us fellow artists is his newsletter. He published the Zone VI Newsletter, a quarterly little pamphlet filled with wisdom, wit and information, from 1973 till 1995. There are 83 newsletters in the collection and if you can find a set for a reasonable price, buy it! (Watch eBay)

Fred Picker also authored a great book for the beginning B&W photographer titled "The Zone VI Workshop." This is another good book to add to your library. It is based on simplicity itself, and if you are a beginner experimenting with B&W, you need to read this book.

If you can find a copy of one of the Zone VI Catalogs, this is also a great reference for your collection. Not that any of the items are still available, but just as a collector's item for your reference.

We still own Zone VI 4×5 and 8×10 cameras. These are well-designed, rugged, bullet-proof view cameras. If you are thinking of getting a wooden field camera, be sure not to pass up a look at a used Zone VI.

Zone VI also manufactured several innovative and unusual pieces of equipment for the darkroom. The Zone VI Compensating Enlarging Timer and Compensating Developing Timer are a permanent fixture in our darkroom. Though none of this equipment is available new, you can find it used. Check out eBay, and be ready to pay near original retail for some items. They are that good!

So. . . if you have never heard of Fred Picker, and are serious about B&W photography, you should take the time to familiarize yourself with the man and his products. We have a complete Zone VI Newsletter Index on our web site available FREE as a PDF download. Look in the Articles Area.

Fiddlin' Around

This entry was posted on August 27, 2010.

Years ago I found myself with access to a violin. I love the sound of a violin. There is something about a beautiful, single note when played by an accomplished violinist. There is a richness... a richness of sound... a deep resonance, with harmonious overtones in just a single note. I thought this can't be that hard, you just draw the bow across the string and out comes the sound. Not quite for me though. I even resorted to reading a little in the beginner's book on bow technique. But, no matter how hard I tried, it always sounded like someone dragging a heavy metal chair across a concrete floor. It was immediately apparent that I really did not want to learn the technique that bad. That was the end of my effort with the violin.

So, what does this have to do with photography you ask? Well, maybe nothing. . . maybe a lot. . . depends on your point of view and interest. No matter what the commercial says, there is no easy, quick way to anything. . . and. . . believe it or not, you can never have it all, and there is no free lunch! Life is about choices. If you spread yourself too thin, you will never achieve anything. If you sort of

think you are interested in LF or ULF photography, you are setting yourself up for failure. LF, and especially ULF, is not easy, not foolproof, and is hard work. There are many pitfalls that will frustrate and test your patience. If it can go wrong, it will! You have to really want to work with LF or ULF. You have to be able to find your way through all of the little things that will ruin your every effort. If you are determined, and if you really have the desire, you can, and will master the craft. Persistence and patience will pay off in the long run. But, if you are looking for instant gratification, find another interest.



I would never recommend that anyone jump into LF or ULF photography. It is just not for the faint of heart. . . those that are not dedicated enough to invest in the time it takes to master the process are doomed to failure. Sort of like playing the violin. I am really glad I didn't buy a violin just to find out I actually didn't want to learn to play the thing. If you only have a casual interest, you just may be better off letting someone else do the fiddlin' around.

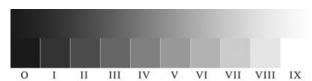
ZONE LANGUAGE

This entry was posted on November 28, 2012.



The Zone System is always a controversial subject among serious B&W photographers. Seems there are numerous versions and sub-versions of the system devised by Ansel Adams and Fred vi vii viii Archer. Each artist must choose what works best for them. Like most everything in photography, it is a very personal choice.

In the Zone System, the tonal scale from white to black is divided into even steps that are either twice or one half of the previous value. This allows the photographer to translate, or visualize, meter readings into finished print values, or Zones.



Certain elements of the scene to be photographed are sometimes used as a standard reference. Here is how Ansel described Zones;

1	ANSEL ADAMS' DESCRIPTION OF ZONES
	LOW VALUES
Zone O	Complete lack of density in the negative image, other than film base density plus fog. Total black in the print.
Zone I	Effective threshold. First step above complete black in the print. Slight tonality, but no texture.
Zone II	First suggestion of texture. Deep tonalities, representing the darkest part of the image in which some detail is required.
Zone III	Average dark materials. Low values showing adequate texture.
	MIDDLE VALUES
Zone IV	Average dark foliage. Dark stone. Landscape shadow. Recommended shadow value for portraits in sunlight.
Zone V	Clear north sky (panchromatic rendering). Dark skin. Gray stone. Average weathered wood. Middle gray (18% reflectance).
Zone VI	Average Caucasian skin value. Light stone. Shadows in snow in sunlit snowscapes.
	HIGH VALUES
Zone VII	Very light skin. Light gray objects. Average snow with acute side lighting.
Zone VIII	Whites with textures and delicate values (not blank whites). Snow in full shade. Highlights on Caucasian skin.
Zone IX	Glaring white surfaces. Snow in flat sunlight. White without texture. (The only subjects higher than Zone 9 would be light sources; they would be rendered as the maximum white value of the paper surface.

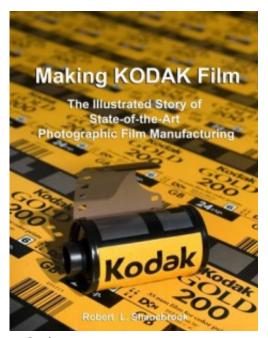
No matter whether you practice the pure AA Zone System, or any of its variations, there is one aspect that I believe is an invaluable tool for everyone. Speaking in Zones is a universal language, much like math or music. Speaking in Zones allows everyone to find a common way of communicating what they see, what they feel, what they want their interpretation of a subject to be, or what they wish to say.

I am not a Zone System purist in any way. I practice what I have found works best for me. But, I do use Zones, and use the Zone language in everything I do photographically. I prefer its simplicity and ease of expression. I know that if I am discussing an image with a fellow photographer and I say that I placed this area on a particular Zone and this other area fell on another, we are communicating in a common language.

So, whether you are a true-blue 'Zonie' or not, I believe everyone should be well acquainted with the language of Zones. In photography, it is a universal language.

AN INTERESTING BOOK "MAKING KODAK FILM" by Robert L. Shanebrook

This entry was posted on October 7, 2011.



I have always been a collector of books, and I have always been interested in how things are made. I am especially fascinated with large industrial manufacturing processes. Photography is also more than a fascination for me, it has become my prime interest. I have little interest in the chemistry and mechanics beyond knowing how to make things work, yet I am still fascinated with how things are made. I ran across an interesting book a while back, put it on my list of things I needed to check out, and promptly forgot all about it. Typical for me, but thankfully I did remember the book and ordered a copy.

If you were ever curious as to how photographic film is manufactured, then I can highly recommend a great book on how Kodak makes film. "Making KODAK Film; The Illustrated Story of State-of-the-Art Photographic Film Manufacturing" by Robert L. Shanebrook, is a book I can suggest to answer the majority of your questions about what goes into manufacturing film. I will quote from the author's

web site;

Information in the book

The book was compiled based on my personal experience plus the input from Kodak experts. Kodak provided access to Kodak Park and assigned experts to the project. Typically the experts explained the operation to me and then accompanied me as I photographed. After I retired I spent over forty days photographing in Kodak Park and many more days in discussion.

In addition, I was aided by input from 24 Kodak retirees. In most cases the retirees were the predecessors of the current Kodak experts that helped me. I also utilized the advice of ten experts from outside Kodak. To insure accuracy the manuscript was reviewed by many of the people that provided information used in the book.

I am grateful to over ninety people who helped me with the book.

Author

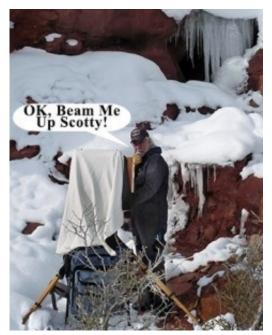
Bob Shanebrook graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology and worked at Eastman Kodak Company for 35 years before retiring in 2003. At Kodak he worked as a commercial photographer, researcher, product development engineer, film manufacturing manager, and for over twenty years was a Worldwide Product-Line Manager for Kodak Professional Films. He was involved in nearly all aspects of Kodak's black-and-white and professional film business.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in learning about the art and craft of film manufacturing. For me this was a slow read since the book is mostly photographs. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, with some of these machines, it may be more like ten thousand.

Mr. Shanebrook has self published this book and I can recommend it is a good one. . . two thumbs up from me. A great read if you are interested in just how complex the film in your camera is to produce. More information and how to order a copy from the author can be found $\frac{\text{HERE}}{\text{HERE}}$.

ANOTHER WORLD

This entry was posted on September 19, 2013.



I was recently involved in a very serious discussion about photography. I was informed that the trend in photography today is for B&W prints to be light and airy. I was told that the deep blacks and brilliant whites I love so much are reminiscent of photography of the 1930's and 1940's and is not 'in' today. I was also informed that today's trend is all about color images. I was given the impression that B&W is, in this so-called 'modern' world, sort of an ugly stepchild. At least, that was the impression I was given after a conversation with someone that is supposedly an 'expert' in the field.

Personally I have never been one to adhere to the current 'trend' or 'fad' nor do I give a rat's rear about whatever is 'in' today. I have no interest in what is popular, nor in fashion. To be an artist you have to, first and foremost, be true to yourself. If you pander to the wishes of others, you will do little more than chase your tail trying to please everyone else. What is most important is to cater to your own vision. Truly meaningful images only occur when you have an internal

connection to what you are photographing. If you are following some sort of fad, or the perceived wants of others, all you create are hollow nothings. This is what advertising photography is to me. I look at the images in magazines and TV commercials and all that is there for me is something visual to catch the eye for the purpose of selling something. My personal definition of salesmanship is, convincing someone to buy something they don't want, don't need, and can't afford. I want nothing to do with this mindset. But I digress from my original thoughts.

I have a different view as to how I want to present my subject. I really wish I could find another planet to photograph. I want to show a world that is unseen by human eyes. This sort of thing being impossible, I have to resort to finding things that I can interpret in such a way as to portray them as otherworldly.

I have no interest in presenting a literal representation, but more literally, I am interested in, and strive to create, my interpretation of what I photograph. I love the abstract. I like to give my viewers a look at something they will not see every day. I have no interest in documenting the boring everyday. I wish I could visit another planet, another world, in another galaxy. But alas, I have to settle for making photographs that match my vision as best I can on this planet.

BEER & RODINOL

This entry was posted on March 24, 2012.



When I first began working with B&W in my own darkroom I only had a 35mm camera. So I shot many rolls of 36 exposure Tri-X. At one time my favorite developer was Rodinol. Not very expensive, easy to use, keeps forever and I liked the negatives. What else could you ask for?

Even way back then I kept a notebook with all of my darkroom procedures laid out in a step-by-step fashion. This way I knew I would always do things exactly the same. I used the same graduates, arranged in the same order every time. Developing film is a one shot deal. Make a mistake and that is all she wrote. At this point in my progression with film and darkroom, I had become confident in my ability to develop film. The process had become the first step on the way to making prints.

My procedure for film was simple. I would line up my chemical containers in the correct order. Fill them with the proper liquids and adjust the temperature. Then I would head to my closet

darkroom to load the film into the developing tank. I used a 16oz tank that held two reels and I usually did two rolls at a time. I loved the Rodinol because it came in a stock syrup and was mixed something like 1:200, if memory serves me correctly. I would measure the stock using two small syringes since it only took a few milliliters to make up the developer. I would lay the syringes, once loaded, next to the container marked developer which contained distilled water. I always have used presoak, so once the film was in the presoak, I would empty the syringes into the developer container and stir up the developer. Not much to it, simple and easy. Usually took me about forty five minutes from start to hanging up film to dry.

Now this one particular Saturday myself and a few friends went out and I shot two rolls of film that day. Later that evening we returned to my place for a few beers and by about 8:00 everyone headed home. I had this bright idea that if I processed the film from the day it would be dry and I could print it Sunday. Nothing to it, just get out the notebook, measure and slosh... processed film!

There was nothing very special about this film run, except the slight fog in my head from the beers and maybe a little too much sun. Everything went as usual. Once the film was washed I unrolled the first strip to find it completely clear end to end. The second roll was the same. What the @#\$%^*? My first thought was the camera quit working. As I sat there perplexed I looked at my processing line and what do you think I saw? There next to the empty container for the developer lay my two syringes with the stock Rodinol still in them. I had failed to mix the developer. I learned right there that plain distilled water will not develop film. I also immediately enacted a strict rule in the darkroom; NEVER MIX RODINOL AND BEER!

CONSISTENCY IS THE SECRET

This entry was posted on March 24, 2013.



Working in the wet darkroom processing both film and paper is nothing more than simple lab work. You are a lab technician in charge of performing a series of processes. These processes must be done exactly the same way each and every time in order to guarantee consistent results. Any variation in process or mixtures will affect the end result.

You have to keep track of exactly how you process both film and paper. Consistency is of paramount importance when processing film. You only have one chance with your film and if you make a mistake there is no going back. If you happen to make a mistake when printing you can always start again. You only lose a sheet of paper. With the film, you loose the image forever.

It is imperative that you do everything exactly the same every time. Any variation, even down to the tray sizes and volume of chemical can affect the end result. Film processing is not hard, but you have to do everything exactly the same every time. It is also worth mentioning that you have to be scrupulously clean. Contamination of any of the processing chemicals can cause disastrous results.

One thing that is easily overlooked is mixing up the stock solution tops when using developers that have more than one part. Only remove one cap at a time and replace each before opening the next. Also, mark each cap and never mix them up.

Good darkroom habits begin with keeping notes. I keep a three ring binder containing notes on all of the procedures that I use in the darkroom. I have notes for each film size that includes the size of the trays, chemical mixtures, volumes of chemicals, and number of sheets of film for each processing run. When I begin a film processing session, the first thing I do is grab my darkroom notes. I make sure that I do the exact same thing every film run.

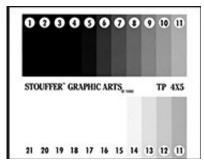
Even the printing process needs to have order and a plan to ensure you do not end up chasing your tail. My darkroom notes also contain information that pertains to printing. Though not as critical as film, I want to be sure I do things in an orderly and repeatable manner. I also want to be sure I mix all of my chemicals correctly, so everything is written down.

One of my favorite darkroom stories comes from Fred Picker. In his information packed little book titled "ZONE VI WORKSHOP" he describes his early days trying to get a handle on the process of B&W printing. If you have a copy of this gem of a book, turn to page 40 and read the chapter titled "THE CUSTOM LAB." This is a really good account of how NOT to print.

I keep notes on most everything I do in the darkroom. There are times when I cannot remember exactly how I did something. With my notes there is no question as to how to remain consistent. As Fred Picker used to say, "DIFFERENT IS NOT THE SAME!"

DON'T GET TOO HUNG UP ON TESTING

This entry was posted on January 29, 2009.



We have been on a quest for that little something extra in the photographic print. There are great prints, then there are prints that have that magical something. Printing comprises a great deal of the quality of the finished print, but you have to have the information on the negative before you can make the print. We have used Pyro film developers for some time now, and every time we find a new formula we do a little film testing and then eagerly head to the field to see what we have.

We have had great luck with several of the modern Pyro developers, but it has become confusing as to exactly what each formula did that made us change. So we have embarked on an all-inclusive, side-by-side, test of our favorite four Pyro developers.

This has turned into a little more of a project than originally anticipated. We had to design and build a film sensitometer. Then we had to gather data, plot curves and evaluate them. Then it was off to field testing. No laboratory test will tell you what the real world result will be. But knowledge is power and squeezing every little bit out of your film is what makes great images. You have to push the limits and find the boundaries.

This has been quite an experience, all in all, and I would not suggest anyone go to such lengths unless you are really curious. The bottom line is, don't get too hung up on testing. You can waste a lot of time testing. Sometimes you are better off just getting out and making photos. Make the mistakes in the real world, find the answer, solve the problem and get on with your work. You can look at what you bring back and make the necessary adjustment on the fly. Or, you could build a sensitometer and do the testing. It is up to you just how far you really want to go. Just remember, do not let the testing get in the way of your creativity!

In a nutshell: Do not spend a disproportionate amount of your time testing!

I DO NOT PHOTOGRAPH PEOPLE

This entry was posted on July 10, 2013.

I find it odd that when you tell someone you are a photographer they immediately assume you are the local Olan Mills studio operator. They either want a family portrait or have a daughter that is getting married and want to hire you. I guess there is a mass disconnect when it comes to the word photographer. Should I introduce myself as a Fine Art Photographer?

Maybe Fine Art Photographer is a little too stiff for an opener. Perhaps it would be better if I told people I am a photographic artist. That should throw them into a tailspin. Or should I start off by saying I am a photographer that does not work with people? I seem to face this dilemma at times and it is hard to convince some that I only shoot rocks and trees. Should I ask a person if they have some interesting rocks or trees in their back yard that they would like me to photograph? How about a nice 11×14 contact print of that old barn out on granddad's old farm?

I am not out to offend anyone. I have no need to place myself above any portrait photographer, it is that I just don't do people. It takes a special kind of person to coax out those really interesting images of a person. The knack of catching that expression just so. I'm no good at it and I will be the first to admit that to anyone.

I don't like photographing anything that moves. I hate the wind. Seems every time I find something really interesting and I check and see the wind is absolutely calm... well... you know what happens. You get the camera all in place, pull the slide, get the shutter release in hand and there is just this little hint of a breath of moving air. Just enough to make some little feathery leaf or weed wiggle. I shoot with big cameras. An 8×10 is my every day shooter. I shoot with very small apertures and very long exposure times. If anything I have chosen to be perfectly sharp moves, I have just wasted a sheet of film. Depth of field is very scarce. How do you get someone to not move a muscle? Guess if I were photographing people I would be best suited to work with the dead. Would that suffice as an inanimate object?

My hat is off to all you portrait shooters. I really don't know how you do it... or I should say I could not do it with any degree of success.

So for those of you that are not familiar with Fine Art Photographers, the next time someone tells you they are a photographer, be sure to ask first if they do people. Don't just assume that photographer translates to Olan Mills Portrait Studio.

THE ART IN PHOTOGRAPHY?

This entry was posted on April 29, 2010.



I was recently asked to comment and then was drawn into a discussion on the art of photography and the influence of competition. Specifically, how people's artistic creativity is swayed by making photographs for the purpose of competing against each other for the satisfaction of winning a blue ribbon.

I am very much against being a member of any large club or organization. Why? Because I feel there is too much of a tendency to become trapped in an endless loop of trying to fit into someone else's idea of what art should be. Creating images for the sole purpose of winning some contest, for me at least, is a recipe for killing creativity, imagination and individuality, thus turning you into just another ho-hum shutter clicker.

Art is a very personal thing. You cannot please everyone, so why even try to please anyone? You need to please yourself first and foremost. Your art is an expression of what you see and feel. It has nothing to do with what anyone else likes or dislikes. So, why torture yourself by trying to entertain someone else's idea of what your image should contain, or not contain? Especially if the only reward is a sixty cent ribbon!

It is very important to hone and understand the craft of photography. This is the easy part. You have to understand the craft of your chosen medium. This is true of any creative activity, from wood carving to painting. If you do not understand how to use your equipment and you are not able to learn the ins and outs on your own, by all means, take a class, join a club or group. But, once you attain a basic mastery of the craft, get as far away from external artistic influence as you possibly can. Yes, you also need to learn a few artistic basics. You need to study art theory and understand a few fundamental concepts concerning composition and the artistic view. But, you do not need an endless influence molding you into what someone else views as art. Edward Weston said something to the effect that, "composition is only the best way of seeing." The creation of art has no hard and fast rules. What suits you is the only thing that matters.

Another reason that I steer away from large clubs and organizations is because they tend to be obsessed with equipment. Remember, amateurs talk about equipment... artists talk about art. Learn the craft as quickly as possible, then get on using, and improving that craft in order to create your art. Also remember, a poor craftsman always blames his tools. And speaking of tools, keep in mind that a poor craftsman makes poor images no matter how good the equipment. A well rounded craftsman can make admirable, even stunning images with the worst of equipment. You should own the finest hardware you can afford, but never forget, the camera does not make the photo, you do! Get the equipment and craft of photography out of the way as quickly as possible and get on with making your art! The only thing that matters is the finished image.

And speaking of the finished image, personally I could care less if anyone likes any one of my photographs. Any image I make is not created for anyone but me first and foremost. My photography is mine, and mine alone. If you don't like it, then don't bother. If you do like it, then why not do all of us a favor and buy it, and hang it on your wall?

CREATIVITY IS PERSONAL

This entry was posted on March 15, 2010.



We joined a group of local LF photographers last Saturday for a gathering and group shoot at a local park. I have to say that we had a great time. Met some new friends and saw some old ones also. It was a fun time for sure and I am glad we were able to attend. There were nineteen people there and most every kind of camera you could imagine from DSLRs to 8x10s. There was most every level of experience, from beginner to seasoned pro. The talk was lively and the interaction was priceless.

I hauled an 8×10 camera, set it up with several lenses, and let those that were interested look and ask questions. The thing is, I did not expose a single sheet of film. I really had no intention of making an exposure. I was there to enjoy the interaction with like-minded folks. I was there to talk shop. This was a gathering organized for the purpose of letting the interested see what a view camera is and how it works. This is the best way to learn whether you should look more seriously into LF, or not. Working with a view camera is not for everyone. I would never recommend to anyone that they run out and buy a big camera.

I took film, just in case something did materialize, but I never put a holder in the camera. I, for the most part, had no intention of making photographs. Certainly there were some visually interesting things going on in the park, but I was not in the mode of making images. I was in the Left Brain Mode of talking about cameras and how they work.

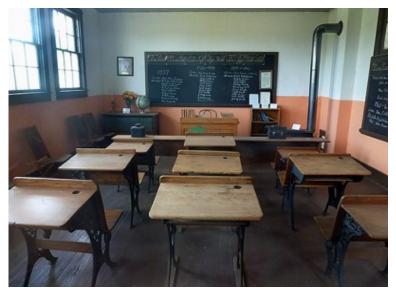
Creativity is something that I have to prepare for. I have to put my mind into Right Brain Mode to go out to shoot film. I need to be, for the most part, alone with myself in a visually stimulating environment in order to work efficiently. For me, creativity is an extremely personal thing that requires every ounce of my attention. I have learned that I seldom ever produce anything of merit when I am with a group. There are far too many distractions for me to think productively. So for an outing like this, I just go to enjoy the company and conversation about my favorite subject. If I find something that I feel requires my uninterrupted attention, I will go back later by myself to explore.

The most important thing about this outing was just being out there with others that share like interests. I love to talk shop, but I can't do it and seriously photograph. I know this from years of experience, so we went to the park, met up with a great bunch of people. Talked each other to death, had lunch and enjoyed ourselves. It was not a day to be creative for me. It was a day to be social and have a lot of fun.

Almost forgot to mention. . . I picked up a new 8×10 camera. . . my first KB Canham!

THE LEARNING WORKSHOP

This entry was posted on March 6, 2013.



Last summer at Yosemite I lent a boy my 4×5 camera. He said, "what do I do with this now?" and I said, "unscrew it and find out for yourself." Why shouldn't he learn how to collapse a camera? Why should I teach him that? You mustn't treat a child as if he's a nitwit; tell him something and let him go to it. I don't believe we do enough self-education.

Interview, Imogen Cunningham "Dialog with Photography"

I personally have always been one to learn on my own. I have never been much to attend classes nor workshops. I do enjoy meeting

with other like-minded people and talking shop, and exchanging ideas and techniques, but serious learning for me is a very personal thing. When I need to learn something new I find a book and start to read. In this modern world of high-tech, I can also do an Internet search. I have always been a self starter and learner, that is just how I think. I do love the atmosphere of a workshop though. A good workshop is short and sweet. An intense few days of focused study. But, it seems that the idea of the photography workshop has changed over the years.

What has happened to the old-fashion photography workshop? It seems that most every workshop now days is more about the destination, than the art of photography. For me, learning anything new, or honing the skills you already possess, can be accomplished just about anywhere you can find a comfortable, and appropriate place for learning. I find it hard to understand why in order to attend a photography workshop you have to trek to some far and picturesque location. This is expensive and if you believe you are going to bring back a portfolio of prize winning prints... well... I just don't see it happening.

A workshop is a place to go to learn. It is a place to expand your skills, learn new skills, interact with like-minded people, and learn from an experienced instructor. You need to attend a workshop for the purpose of learning and this can be done anywhere. Why not spare the expense of exotic travel and attend a local workshop? All you really need is a classroom... most any classroom will do. It would be nice to have an interesting place near by to go outside and get some hands-on field experience, but this need be nothing more than a small park. The idea is to learn procedures that you can use when you do travel to some great place and find something interesting.

Once you have honed your technique in familiar territory, then you can head to the beautiful places. I can never make meaningful images amidst the distraction of a group of people. My concentration is continually interrupted and I find it difficult to stay focused. Only when I am out alone with my subject can I think artistically. The workshop environment is too cluttered and the distractions are far too great. You need to be paying attention to the message, as Fred Picker said, "steal with your eyes." Watch others, especially the instructor, and note how they approach a particular situation. Ask

questions as to why he chose to work in this manner. Watch intensely and make notes, both mentally and physically. . . yes carry a notebook and a pencil. Take notes, make diagrams and sketches, whatever it takes so that you can remember and learn. Do not expect to make meaningful images at a learning workshop. Whatever images you make within the workshop atmosphere are for the purpose of learning. Leave the really serious photography for when you are alone and are not distracted. You will make images that are more meaningful and be more focused when you are able to concentrate on your subject. This is when you put into practice those things you learned in the workshop.

I would love to see more local, small workshops that teach the basics through advanced photographic technique. A classroom-type workshop, where those that are interested in learning the how-to, can learn the ins and outs. Where one can hone those skills necessary for serious work when they do travel to those wonderful places and find things that inspire them to be creative. A learning experience, not a travel experience. How about more workshops that are a learn now, travel later event?

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