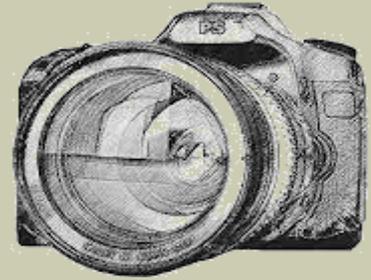


Bellingham Photography Club

Issue 40

August 2021



President's Message

BPC is following our usual schedule and taking August off—no meetings until September.

Traditionally we hold our summer picnic in August; unfortunately last year's COVID-19 crisis meant this wasn't possible, and this year **the picnic has been cancelled** due to low sign-up. We may revisit this again in 2022.

Our next program, on September 8, will be presented by Ham Hayes. He will be sharing his thoughts and images related to "**Contemplative Photography.**" Also, this August hiatus gives us an extra month to work on our 'theme' submittals for our September 22 meeting. Our theme will be "**Still Life,**" to give us an opportunity to try out some of the ideas and lighting setups demonstrated for us at our early July meeting by Alan Alquist.

A week ago or so, I was contacted by the president of a local non-profit who wondered if any of our photographers would be interested in helping to support the organization by taking photos of some special local events. I caught her enthusiasm and signed right up for this **photo opportunity**; see more information inside to see if you might also be interested.

See you on September 8!

Bellingham Photography Club Board

Lorraine Day - President	mesmerie1@gmail.com
Deanna Birdsall - Secretary	iamdela@gmail.com
Alan Alquist - Treasurer	alan@learn2inquire.com
Ham Hayes - Programs	hamhayes@outlook.com
David Johnson - Club Liaison	davidsamishphoto@gmail.com
Lorraine Day - Newsletter Editor	mesmerie1@gmail.com

Summer Hiatus — *No August Meetings!*

Next Meetings:

Sept. 8 — Program:
*Contemplative
Photography*

Sept. 22 — Sharing:
Theme: Still Life

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How to submit

- .jpg format
- Width = 1920 px or less*
- Height = 1080 px or less*
Resolution not important;
150—300 dpi typical.
- File names to begin with
your last name and a
sequential number
(Day 1—Fish House.jpg)
- Total size of email with
attachments: 10 MB max.
- Include exif info in your
email if known

Send images for the website
(Theme, Commentary, or
Members Gallery) to David
Johnson

DavidSamishPhoto@gmail.com

Send images for the news-
letter to Lorraine Day—
mesmerie1@gmail.com

For those who care:

Our website host will resize
your images to a maximum of
1,550 pixels wide by 960 tall. It
does this "to prevent theft of
your originally uploaded full
resolution images and it also
help to ensure that your
images will always load with
minimal loading delay. Your
original image files are
retained and remain unedited."

About BPC

Bellingham Photography Club provides opportunities for photography enthusiasts to enhance and share expertise. Club activities include, but are not limited to, regular meetings, photography field experiences, photography competitions, and special interest forums.

Our goal is to provide encouragement, camaraderie and educational programs that will motivate photographers to improve their skills.

We are meeting on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, when we have a program or demo, and on the 4th (not the last!) Wednesday of the month, to share our monthly theme photos, review photos submitted for critique, and have open photography-related discussion. During COVID-19 management we are meeting online via Zoom.

If you would like to join a meeting as our guest, please contact our president, Lorraine Day, at mesmerie1@gmail.com.

Show Your Stuff!

The Bellingham Photo Club has many venues for sharing your work. We'd love to see YOUR work in one of these places!

Website and Monthly Meetings:

- **Member Galleries** – Members can each upload up to 20 images to the members' gallery on our website. These can be anything you want – your own personal portfolio that you can share with friends and family!
- **Theme of the Month** – Each month, a theme is established and you can submit up to 3 images (the theme for the July meeting is 'Summer Play—Escape from COVID'). The themed images are for sharing, not for critical review (unless you ask for opinions). These images will be shared/reviewed at each monthly meeting.
- **Commentary/Review** – Each month, members can also submit up to 3 images for critical review. These do not need to be tied to the Theme of the Month. Members are encouraged to go online and enter comments; additionally, these images will also be shared at each monthly meeting.

Newsletter – Remember, members can send images the newsletter editor -- me, Lorraine, at mesmerie1@gmail.com – for inclusion in the newsletter. Especially welcome would be a brief explanation of your inspiration, your technique, problems you tackled and overcame (or failed to overcome!), location, exif data or any other information you'd like to share. Absent this, a brief caption would be great.

Come on; let's show our stuff!

Upcoming BPC Schedule

Subject to last-minute change, of course, here is our upcoming schedule for club meetings, programs, and themes.

August 7	No meetings — Summer picnic	
Sept 8	Program: Contemplative Photography	Ham Hayes
Sept 22	Sharing: Theme = My Still Lifes	-----
Oct 13	Program: Layering Your Intent	Keron Psillas
Oct 27	Sharing: Theme = Contemplating Fall	-----
Nov 10	Scavenger Hunt Results	Ham Hayes
Nov 24*	Sharing: Theme = Enhancing Intentionality	-----
Dec 8	Member Slide Show	Ham Hayes
Dec 22*	Sharing: Theme = My Still Life Images	-----

*Possibly subject to change due to holidays

Special Photo Opportunity

- ◆ *Would you like to expand your photographic skills?*
- ◆ *Would you like to support a very worthy cause?*

The non-partisan, non-profit League of Women Voters is looking for volunteer photographers to help promote their local events. All photographs used will carry a full credit line.

The League is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public. It is the League's mission to empower voters and defend democracy.

Among their efforts are work to promote voting rights and expand voter access, fight voter suppression, encourage and facilitate voter registration, expand the teaching of civics in grades K-12, and promote health care reform and environmental protection.

In addition to sponsoring local events to promote these goals, they also have other projects in mind for photographers, such as:

- Photographing their “get out the vote” signs in iconic Bellingham locations
- Photographing school kids (with permission) as they read the civics textbooks sponsored by the League

You can learn more about the League at their websites:

<https://www.lwv.org/> <https://www.lwv.org/local-leagues/lwv-bellinghamwhatcom-cty>

If you'd like to know more, contact Lorraine Day at mesmerie1@gmail.com.



The basic material of photographs is not intrinsically beautiful. It's not like ivory or tapestry or bronze or oil on canvas. You're not supposed to look at the thing, you're supposed to look through it. It's a window.

— John Szarkowski

When I'm working well, I can make a lot of pictures at one time—three or four, each one as good as the next. Then I can go for a year without making one good exposure.

— Harry Callahan

If photography is truly an art, then what it expresses is human emotion. Not what the world looks like. ... It's not about what's in front of you, it's about what's inside of you. ...

Expression, that's what it's all about. Artistic expression, not objective duplication.

— Brooks Jensen

*From David Du Chemin's "Contact Sheet,"
January 2021*

Clubs, Competitions, & Critiques

When I was a kid, I begged my mother to let me take horseback riding lessons. After some tearful pleading (mine, not hers), she relented. At my first lesson, I was one of four kids, and my teacher insisted we learn first to pick the crap out of the horse's hooves. She showed us how to do it, and so enthusiastic were we that we all rushed in with our hoof picks, grabbed a leg—one for each of the four of us—and damn near dropped the poor horse to the ground without a leg to stand on.

Not unrelated (though it will take me a moment or two to tie the threads together), a photographer recently reached out to me about her frustrations with the camera club in which she was a member. She felt like the black sheep; that she and her photographs just didn't seem to belong. It felt to me like she was relaying that experience in search of some solidarity, and even permission, to allow her membership to lapse and not feel guilty about doing so, both of which I gave her. But in the weeks since that conversation, I have wished that I had answered more fully. So this is my chance to do that—both to her and to anyone who has ever been stung by an insensitive critique, a competition loss, or the frustration of trying to learn in a group what is often best, and sometimes only, learned on our own.

In the 35 years I've been practicing this craft, I have somehow managed never to join a camera club; you'd be correct in thinking that this makes me wildly unqualified to write on the matter. I know almost nothing about camera clubs, except that, like the individual humans of whom these clubs are comprised, some are better than others, and some are amazing.

That's my caveat: this is not about camera clubs. It's about too many people grabbing at the hooves and leaving us without a leg to stand on.

At some point, most of us will be in a context in which we open ourselves, through our work, to the feedback of others. It might be a camera club; it might not. Maybe it's online. Sometimes that feedback will be completely unsolicited, often by people who share

*A great photograph....
With all its other
characteristics.... It
doesn't come to any
ultimate conclusion. It
never closes the issue –
there are always things
left open, undecided, not
yet dealt with. This for
later – things for us to
think about.*

— Mike Nichols

*Taking pictures is
savoring life intensely,
every hundredth of a
second.*

— Marc Riboud

*You can't depend on
your eyes if your
imagination is out of
focus.*

— Mark Twain

David duChemin, continued...

only this one thing in common with us: they have cameras with which they make photographs and opinions about how this should be done. In other words, they've got a hoof pick, and they plan to use it!

Beyond that, those who weigh in on our images and offer feedback might come from different backgrounds and share no common photographic influences with us. It's likely they want to achieve different things with their photographs than you do with yours, and have different reasons entirely for picking up the camera in the first place. Some have been using their cameras for a very long time; some still routinely forget to take the lens cap off, so new are they at this craft. But still, they rush in to offer advice and opinions. And it is most certain that these complicated and well-meaning people not only have different ideas about what makes a photograph "good," but they have a powerful will to share that with others: to help; to grab a hoof and start cleaning.

And as they help, they'll focus on the issues that were (or continue to be) challenging to them: the things they've learned or are still learning. In photography, those are likely to be technical concerns: how sharp is the image, how was it exposed, does the composition conform to devices or rules that they understand?

It might be matters of taste: it's too saturated; it's not saturated enough.

It might also be gear. Give someone a hammer, and everything is a nail, right? One photographer gets a new flash, and suddenly everyone should be making portraits that are heavily gelled and side-lit. Another learns a new black and white conversion technique, and you find yourself feeling the pressure to make your images look like his, even when your work is about the exploration or celebration of vibrant colour.

In another context—competitions—our work is judged by people rarely as sensitive to what we were trying to accomplish with that work as we are ourselves. I judged a competition recently; it was my first, and it'll be my last. It killed me because, yes, some photographs among the entrants were the result of much more technical skill, experience, and vision than others. But to judge them as "better" when I was so aware that some of the "lesser"

Continued...

When I work, and in my art, I hold hands with God.

— Robert Mapplethorpe

For a photographer, the first 70 years are a bit difficult, but after that things get better.

— Robert Doisneau

Photography is about the concept of a frame—a frame of mind, a frame of context. When I photograph, I frame an abstract concept just as I frame a literal crop of the three-dimensional world. Ultimately, though, photography is as much about what is left out of the frame as it is about what the photographer chooses to keep inside the frame.

— Daryl Oh

Sharpness is overrated.

— Keith Carter

I think most of us go through our lives partially asleep. Even though our eyes are open and we're out in the world, we're daydreaming or we're distracted in some way. But when I make a photograph of something, at that moment I feel in a very precise, conscious, alert, awakened state, even if it's only for a split-second. And for me that's the joy of photography: to be connected to things in the world that are suddenly of conscious value.

— Joel Meyerowitz,
Photography in 100 Words.

Talking about pictures as though you could tell anybody how to take good ones is nuts. Pictures are given, not taken.

— Robert Adams

David duChemin, continued...

images probably represented more significant progress and braver steps forward for the photographers who made them was painful for me, especially without having a way to explain my reasoning or reassure them that my choice of one image over another was based on metrics that might have had nothing to do with what they were trying to accomplish—or the courage that it took them to make and share the image in the first place.

As I was writing this, I received yet another email from a photographer discouraged by her placement in a competition. "I guess I thought I was doing better than I am," she said with resignation. So since this is really the point of this whole article, I want to make this big, bold statement:

Competitions and drive-by-critiquing do not measure how far you've come. In fact, they don't even tell you where you're at right now on your journey; they tell you where your work is relative to the expectations and tastes of others. Not to how brave you're becoming. Not to the risks you are taking. Not to the discovery of your vision or the refinement of your voice. They say nothing about how much stronger your composition is becoming or whether your images are becoming more poetic. They tell you, really, what other people think.

Other people, in whatever context they are found, are a tough place in which to find yourself and discover your own path. In groups, it is even harder. Groups tend to encourage a certain level of conformity. They don't do it to be mean. They don't do it to kill your spirit. It just happens. It's hard to do otherwise because when we're all trying to find our own way in a group, the only real common ground is where our images are similar rather than where they are unique. It is much easier and much more comfortable to focus on what lies in the middle—in that small area where our photographs overlap, like the middle of a Venn diagram. For the photographer trying something different, the reception can be cool at best, and it's hard to be on the receiving end of that when you've put your heart into it. It's easy to feel hurt and get discouraged. No wonder so many photographers doubt themselves.

Individuality and the healthy stubborn desire to do things our own way (because that's often where we find the greatest

David duChemin, continued...

meaning and happiness) is not often found—or nurtured—easily in groups. The fact that we all use a similar tool (the camera) is a difficult premise around which to build a community when otherwise we're concerned about entirely different creative purposes.

Just because we all use the same kind of tool doesn't mean we're trying to do similar things with that tool, and that should give comfort to those of you who have been bruised by the constant efforts of others to hammer you into a mold that is more understandable to them or looks more like what they are doing.

I often wonder how the photographs of Uta Barth or Saul Leiter would be critiqued at their local camera club or how they would fare in your average competition if they were to drop by and add their images anonymously to the pile. What about William Eggleston, Wynn Bullock, or Daido Moriyama? Would the quality of that work be decided by consensus, or by the prevailing tastes within the group?

Separated from their prestige as name-brand photographers, would their work be praised or would it be picked apart in the hopes of making it something we could all agree was more immediately understandable or "better," which of course means "more like what I would have done"?

People mean well. But sometimes we charge in, and to the kid with the hoof pick, everything looks like a hoof, right? Very few people intentionally disparage your work. And they aren't trying consciously to influence you to make your images look like theirs. It's just that we all have such blind spots, and the way we do things and the reasons we do them makes sense to us, so it also makes sense that our methods and goals would be the filter through which we try to understand the work of others. To do otherwise takes a difficult but much-needed leap of empathy.

To the person hurt by the judgments of others, that empathy is just as important. Perhaps it'll soften the blow to understand that other people don't evaluate your work on the same criteria with which you made that work. They can't. It's possible they need to encounter your work first; it might take them a while to

The final strength in really great photographs is that they suggest more than just what they show literally.

— Robert Adams

There are an awful lot of people in the world and it's going to be terribly hard to photograph all of them... It was my teacher Lisette Model who finally made it clear to me that the more specific you are, the more general it will be.

— Diane Arbus

The truth is you have too many cameras and you don't take enough photographs.

— Kyle Cassidy

Continued...

No place is boring, if you've had a good night's sleep and have a pocket full of unexposed film.

— Robert Adams,
*Darkroom & Creative
Camera Techniques*

In the end it all comes down to this: you have a choice (or more accurately a rolling tangle of choices) between giving your work your best shot and risking that it will not make you happy, or not giving it your best shot -- and thereby guaranteeing that it will not make you happy. It becomes a choice between certainty and uncertainty. And curiously, uncertainty is the comforting choice.

— Ted Orland,
Art & Fear

David duChemin, continued...

understand it. To be hurt by this and still to learn from it are not mutually exclusive. To those in camera clubs or leading photography communities, that empathy might be what opens the door to understanding a wider gamut of creative expression among your members and a reordering of the importance you place on technical merit. Maybe it's time to make room for the poetic and to give points for play and risk, and to encourage people who not only get better with their cameras but bolder with their courage.

The great temptation of popular photography culture is to forget the difference between teaching aspiring photographers to use a camera, and influencing what they say with it and how they say it.

It is a temptation that, should we give in to it or choose it by default, will result in choosing the perfect over the poetic, what is safe over what takes courage, and what is mediocre and average over what is individual and outstanding.

As you head into 2021, remember that your journey can't be measured by the metrics created by other people. Learn everything you can from every source you can, but remember your journey can't be measured by the footprints of others and you can't borrow their map. It doesn't matter where you are relative to others, but that you're taking the next steps that get you closer to a destination only you will recognize. Happy New Year, my friend.

For the Love of The Photograph,

David



Think this article would be helpful or encouraging to others? I'd be so grateful if you shared it with others.

<https://davidduchemin.com/>

<https://craftandvision.com/>