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# e-news

from the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain

**DARE TO BE DIFFERENT VOLUME ONE**

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Paint abstract No 3 by Stan Farrow



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**Rotterdam Cube Houses by Diane Seddon**



## **DON'T GIVE THE JUDGES WHAT THEY WANT ... ... MAKE THEM WANT WHAT YOU GIVE THEM!**

Some time ago I found myself advising a photographer that her images were thought provoking and exciting but were unlikely to succeed in our Awards for Photographic Merit or even in Camera Club competitions. This made me think. Why don't we recognise the value of such images? I appealed to e-news readers to send me work which they enjoyed making but did not succeed in competitions and the response was huge! Nearly 100 photographers sent in over 1000 images! So many that this is Dare to be Different Volume One. Volume Two will appear before too long and I also hope to prepare a Recorded Lecture when time permits.

Many of them are reproduced here without any comment from me but with occasional explanation by the maker. Please approach these with an open mind. Some you may think are perfectly acceptable but just haven't been done very well and some you may not understand at all. Ask yourself, "do I like this image and would I mark it well if I was judging a competition?" If you don't like it, is it just your personal taste or prejudice and should its merits be recognised? If just a few people recognise the validity of just a few of these images, the exercise will have been worthwhile. *Rod. Hon. Editor.*



Botanically Blue by Sam Ruth



# STREET PHOTOGRAPHY with Caroline Preece LRPS

<https://www.carolinepreecephotography.com/>



A rainy winter's day in London by Caroline Preece

I am primarily a street photographer and we have a standing joke in my London club (Loughton CC) about the fact that I own bottom spot in competitions, behind all the beginners - at least judges are not usually neutral about my images!. This was one of many reasons I became a judge and it has also led me to speculate why street images often do so badly.

A good street image could be focussed on narrative, mood, atmosphere, a statement about the time and/or place, the light and/ colour in the scene, the amusing, the absurd, and much more. Interesting images are often the more surprising ones which show you something familiar, but in a different way. They push boundaries. But as with anything this is not always the case.



Friends catching up in a cafe by Caroline Preece

To appreciate a good street photography image you need to not only be able to look "at" a photo, but also look "into" it. To experience it. To move from looking to seeing. I think that many people have been 'trained' out of this.

**.. move from looking to seeing.**

You also need to put aside outdated ideas about composition; about what constitutes a good image; about the rules/guidelines. How many people do you know who could explain "the why" behind the critique they are giving? The "why" behind the "what"? There has been a lot of research into how we see. and this has made the phrases we often hear in club critiques redundant, irrelevant to the image they are being used to describe and evaluate. Street images are often rejected and marked down based on outdated notions of what "good" is. This in a photographic sense can be dangerous as it can stop those receiving the critique from progressing due to conservative ideas of what is acceptable. It can lead to the homogenization of photography and the production of soulless and forgettable images. In terms of my own photography I am drawn to producing images with stories, emotions, and/or a sense of the surreal. My images are a reflection of how I see and respond to the world. Sometimes the stories are real, but I also enjoy playing with the fact that, when you frame a shot and remove the context from around the subjects, you can create new realities which



did not exist before. You take a real situation and create a new narrative with it. I am inspired by both old and new photographers. Cartier-Bresson, Brassai, Sabine Weiss, Harold Feinstein, Saul Leiter, Fan Ho, Joakim Moller, Phil Penman, Moises Levy, Dimpy Bhalotia, Gregory Crewdson, master storyteller as opposed to street photographer, and more.

I treat club competitions as mini-exhibitions, where I get a chance to show my work, and, equally importantly, where I see the work the other members are producing. I get recognition externally from people I respect which helps my confidence and, last year, I received a Highly Commended in the International Photography Awards .... but it is not always easy pushing against the tide! It takes a certain amount of bloody-mindedness and I know some people struggle with this. Don't give up!





**Castle Acre Priory in the style of Turner by Francesca Shearcroft.**

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Anne Sutcliffe -Shades of Peach



Anne Sutcliffe -Red Handles



Anne Sutcliffe -Elegance



Anne Sutcliffe -togetherness



Anne unfortunately left us recently and you can read her obituary at [https://www.pagbnews.co.uk/sites/default/files/newsletters/en352%2012%20March%202024\\_0.pdf](https://www.pagbnews.co.uk/sites/default/files/newsletters/en352%2012%20March%202024_0.pdf)



"it's an age thing"! Recently, because I am not able to climb mountains any longer, I have been looking for different genres of photography and I have discovered that I enjoy a bit of *Street*, although I try to make it a little bit different – mainly for my own enjoyment.

One of my very early attempts is attached and I submitted it in a competition as a PDI entry. As it came up on the screen the judge, who is quite well known nationally, immediately commented "well yes, not my cup of tea" and awarded it the lowest mark of the competition.

I am of course not bitter and hold no grudge 😊

Any comment more than welcome and thank you for opening this avenue of opportunity

<<Reflecting.

Kind regards, Charles Meadows



# A GUIDE TO ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY FOR JUDGES

First, the confession, I have an obsession with astronomy conceived in the cradle and undiminished by advancing years. Actually, you do have to be obsessed to practise astronomy in UK conditions. Still, I enjoy sharing my pictures and, as my club has an annual Natural History competition, there is also the perverse pleasure of watching judges trying to compare a damsel fly with a galaxy. Most judges admit to being ignorant when it comes to astrophotography. One remarked that astrophotography appears to be on the increase. This prompts me to offer two things, a guide to astrophotography so you can appear a bit more knowledgeable and a suggestion that astrophotography should, perhaps, be excluded from Natural History competitions.

Let's start with what you are likely to see in astrophotography because it is just embarrassing to hear everything described as 'space' or 'a galaxy'.



< This is a galaxy.

Galaxies are millions of light years away outside the Milky Way (our home galaxy). About 35% of galaxies have a spiral structure. Others are elliptical or irregular. Two small elliptical galaxies are in orbit around this one.

This is a globular cluster >

The central bulge of the Milky Way is surrounded by a halo of about 150 such clusters, each containing tens of thousands

or even millions of stars. The stars in it are very old and obviously densely packed together. The centre of the cluster may contain a black hole.



< This is an open cluster.

Open clusters appear in the spiral arms of galaxies, are up to thirty light years wide and contain up to a few hundred young stars. This one is surrounded by dust left over after the stars formed.

This is a reflection nebula >

Reflection nebulas are clouds of dust illuminated by nearby stars. They tend to be blue.



< This is an emission nebula.

It is a cloud of gas excited by high energy photons from nearby stars. It re-emits the energy in wavelengths that are characteristic of the atoms in the gas. Hydrogen, the most abundant element, emits red light. Emission and reflection nebulas are often found together.

This is a planetary nebula >

Like emission nebulas, planetary nebulas are clouds of ionized gas but, in this case, it is a shell of gas expelled by a star near the end of its evolution. The gas is ionized by radiation from its parent star.



This is a supernova remnant.

A supernova may occur in several ways. It involves an enormous release of energy and the ejection of matter at speeds up to 10% of the speed of light. This matter impacts dust and gas between the stars, becomes extremely hot and emits light as a result.



The challenges of astrophotography include -

- Extreme dynamic range - stars are bright, nebulas and galaxies are generally very dim. How the photographer handles this is an important indicator of skill.
- The exposures have to be long and the target is moving – stars should be round unless it's obviously a star trail picture.

Should astrophotography be judged alongside wildlife, botanical and geological subjects? Part of the difficulty judges face in comparing a butterfly, a fungus, or a sea eagle with a galaxy lies in understanding the technical expertise involved in capturing such images. All require some specialist knowledge, good technique and patience. One possible reason for the increasing popularity of astrophotography is that it has become easier. Developments in cameras, equatorial mounts and, importantly, the computers that control them have made it easier to align the equipment, find and track the target, and capture the necessary photons. However, that is not the end of the story.

When a wildlife photographer packs up at the end of the day, he probably knows whether he has captured a good shot or not and will be planning little more than cropping and some histogram tweaking. Although his equipment, expertise and patience may be exalted beyond that of the casual photographer grabbing a shot of a robin in his garden, they are both operating in a recognisably similar and familiar way.

When an astrophotographer has finished capturing dozens of frames amounting to hours of exposure on the same patch of sky, he still needs dark frames, similar exposures with the lens cap on to eliminate hot pixels and, possibly, amplifier glow, and flat frames, shots of a uniform white screen to deal with dust in the optics and vignetting plus bias frames to deal with mysterious electronic artefacts.

When all these images have been aligned, stacked and combined in the right way, the result often looks almost completely black. Post-processing for the astrophotographer is necessarily lengthy and complex. Whilst judgement, experience and skill play a part, one has to also rely on some special techniques developed by very clever people that are quite different from those routinely used in

These are issues judges should, at least, be aware of. Astrophotography is not for everyone and it is unreasonable to expect all judges to understand it thoroughly. So, I have doubts about it competing with other types of Natural History images in a meaningful way. Perhaps it is time to part company. *Anne Eckersley*

other forms of photography (e.g., removing the stars to process them separately from the nebula). I sometimes wonder how much of my images is truly my own. The power and importance of post-processing in astrophotography arguably put it in a different category from other Natural History genres, where remaining true to the image as captured is paramount.

There's another twist in the tale. When I've been staring at clouds for too long, I get impatient. I go to my computer and choose a telescope in Spain, Italy or Namibia. I then specify target co-ordinates, exposure details (how long and how many) and which filters to use. Then I hand over some cash and wait for the email telling me the data are ready. I, at least, get the pleasure of processing the data and creating my own image, often of targets I can't even see from Surrey.

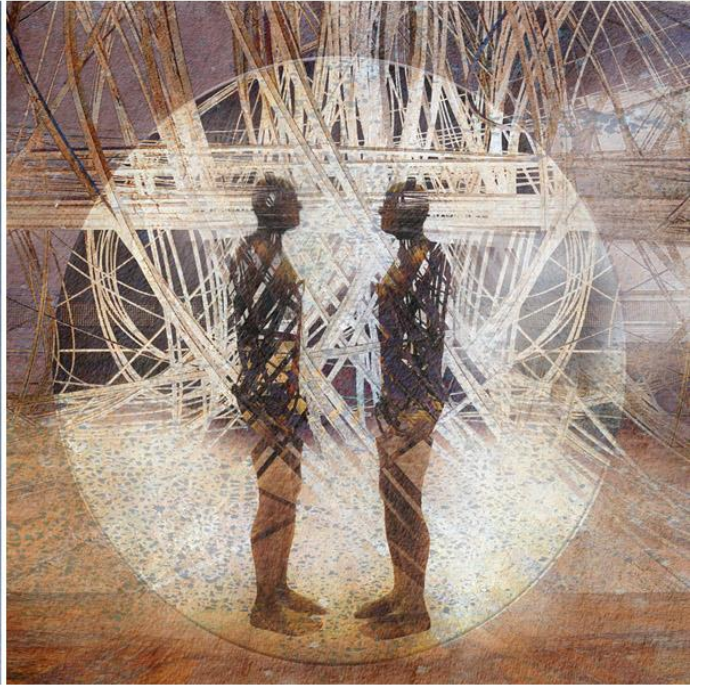
However, I did not assemble *my* kit on my lawn, align it, compose the image, set it going and have the joy of sitting in the freezing cold monitoring its progress. As a result, I feel these remotely generated images do not belong to me in the same way as those I made completely by myself. I have not used any of them in competitions.



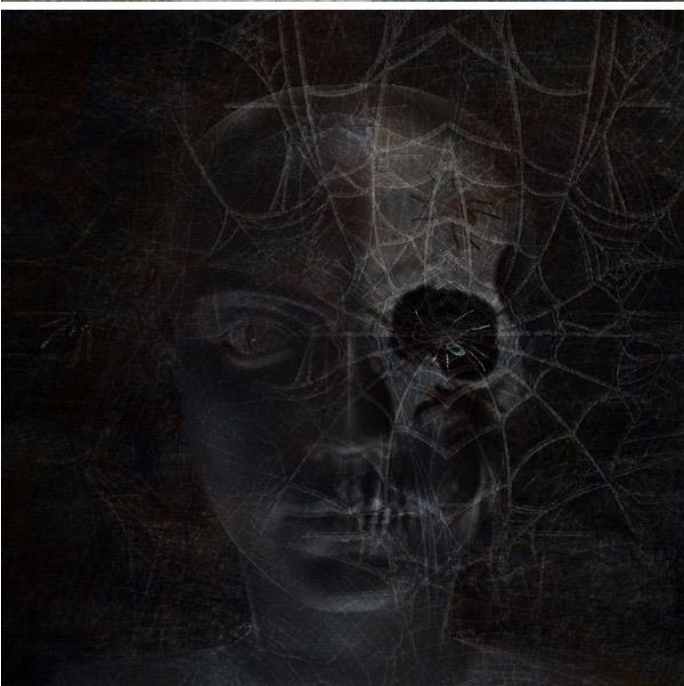
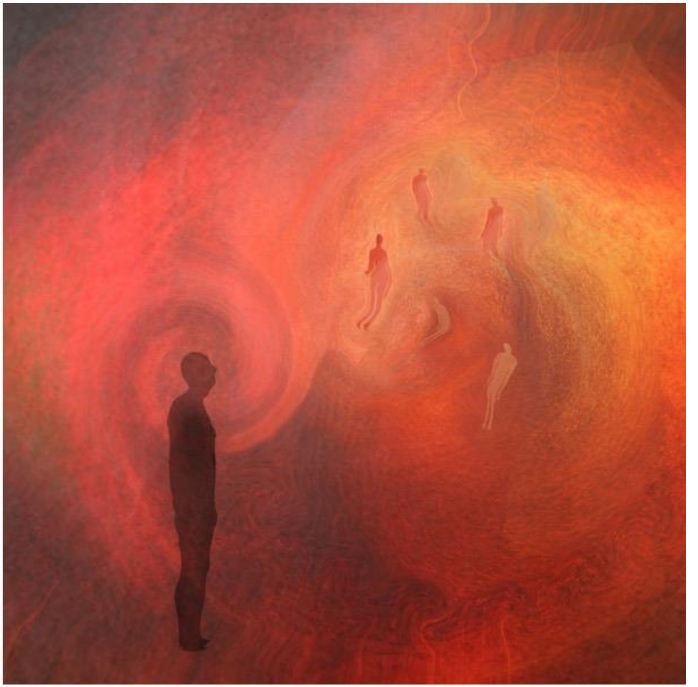
<< This image “I Wish I Could Fly” and those on the next two pages are by Dianne Owen.

CLICK ON any image to view them titled on our website.











# STREET – GILLIAN MACKAY DPAGB EFIAP AWPB BPE2

I am a passionate street photographer. I have in the past moderated my work to fit in with what I think is expected at camera club, hence my awards and distinctions, but now I concentrate my efforts to that genre.

I have for many years been a member of Tenby and District C.C., where my style of work is appreciated. I am also on the panel that chooses images for external competitions but am very reluctant to put forward my



Girl in the coffee Shop.

own work. I hear myself saying “Well it is not really camera club style work” Should it be? Is it? It has had mixed reactions in the past and I feel not worth the risk to our club’s success.

The amount of street photography seen in club circles seems to be limited but I have, in the past few years, found an outlet for my work, away from the camera club scene, where I feel that this genre is better understood.

Street photography and documentary photography, in my opinion, should be photo reality. My street photography has not been manipulated, meaning nothing has been taken out or put in and no presets used. I do crop and “edit” in Lightroom. Street

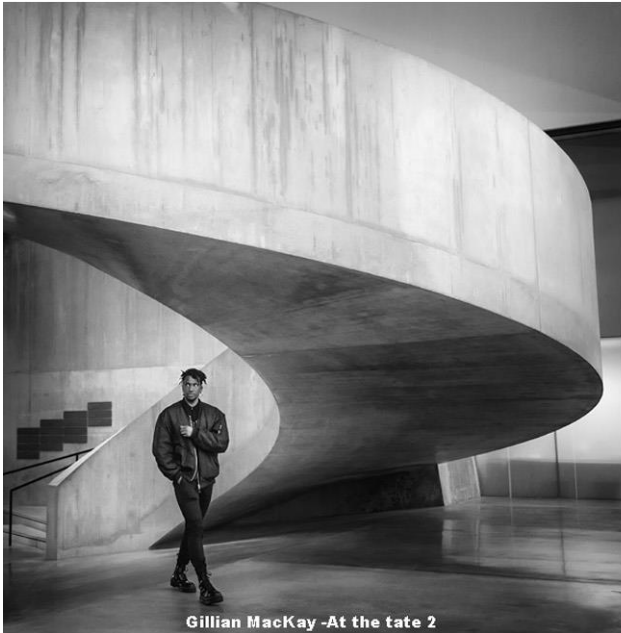
photography is extremely difficult as you have seconds to see, compose and take an image. It has to be more than a record shot. You have to know your camera well and have lots of patience as “hits” are limited.

I am constantly evolving and my style of work seems to be divided into two categories. I am drawn to how people interact with their environment and at the same time I enjoy capturing the stories and emotions of people in their daily lives. I hope my love of people and places is reflected in my work.

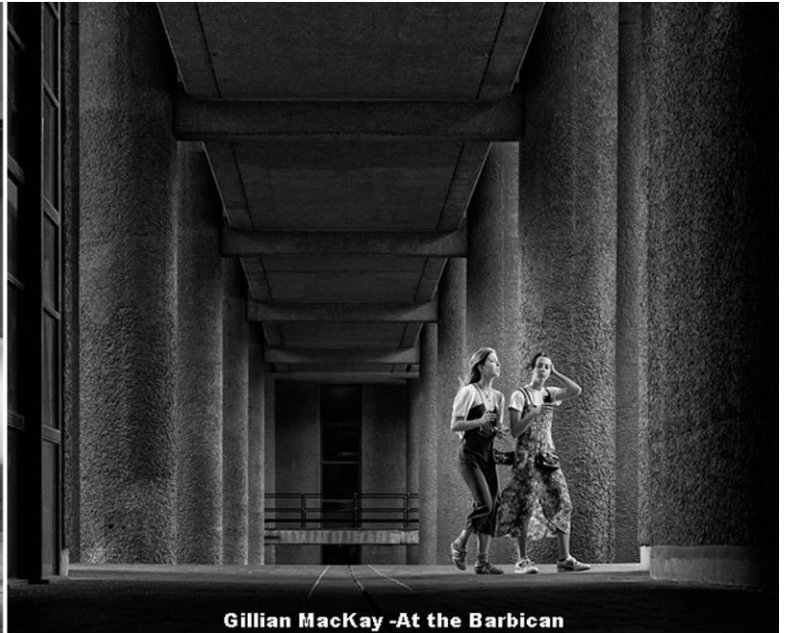


London

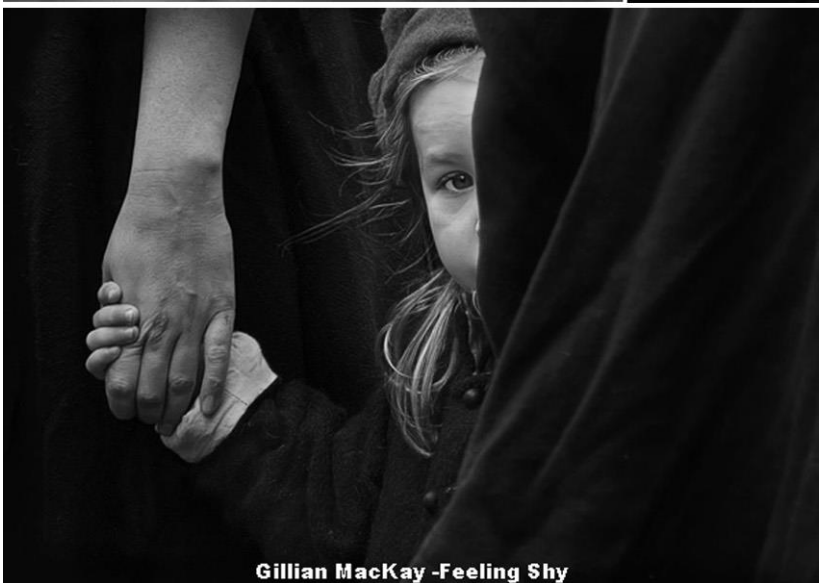




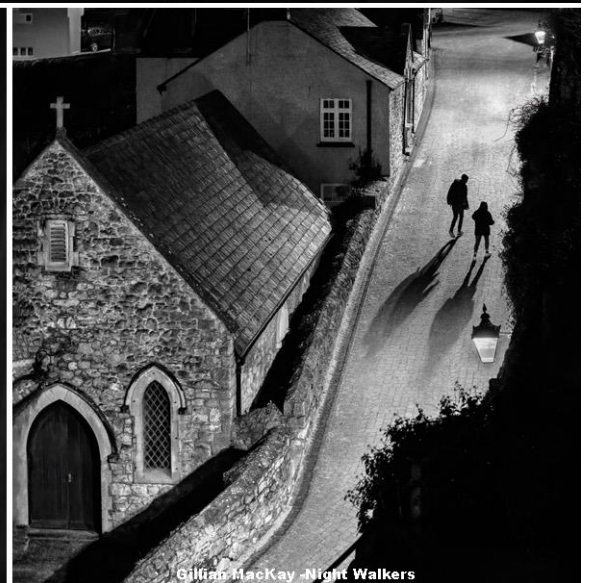
Gillian MacKay -At the Tate 2



Gillian MacKay -At the Barbican



Gillian MacKay -Feeling Shy



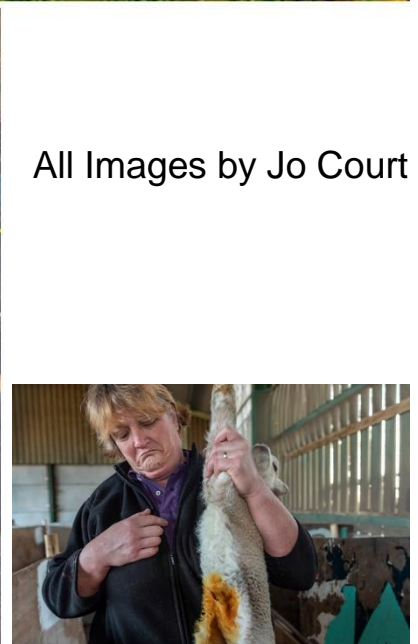
Gillian MacKay -Night Walkers



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<< The Encouragers by Gillian MacKay





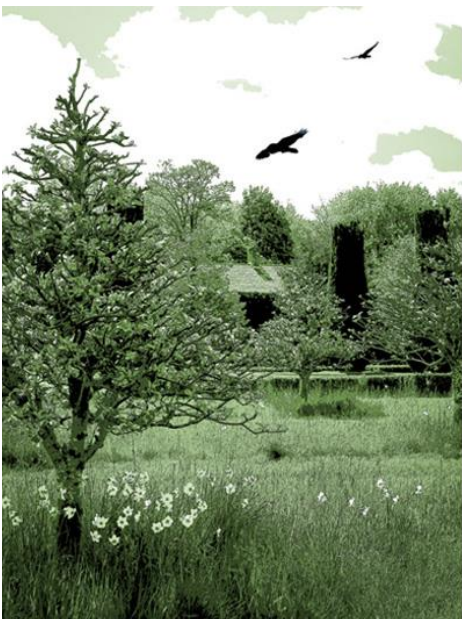
All Images by Jo Court





Taken, with lots of ICM in Northumberland and more than one shot - 'Grace Darling Memorial'. I've only entered it once in a club competition. The judge, marked it 25/30, but held it back to comment on the bravery of the author for entering something so very different.

*Christine Carr* LRPS CPAGB BPE1

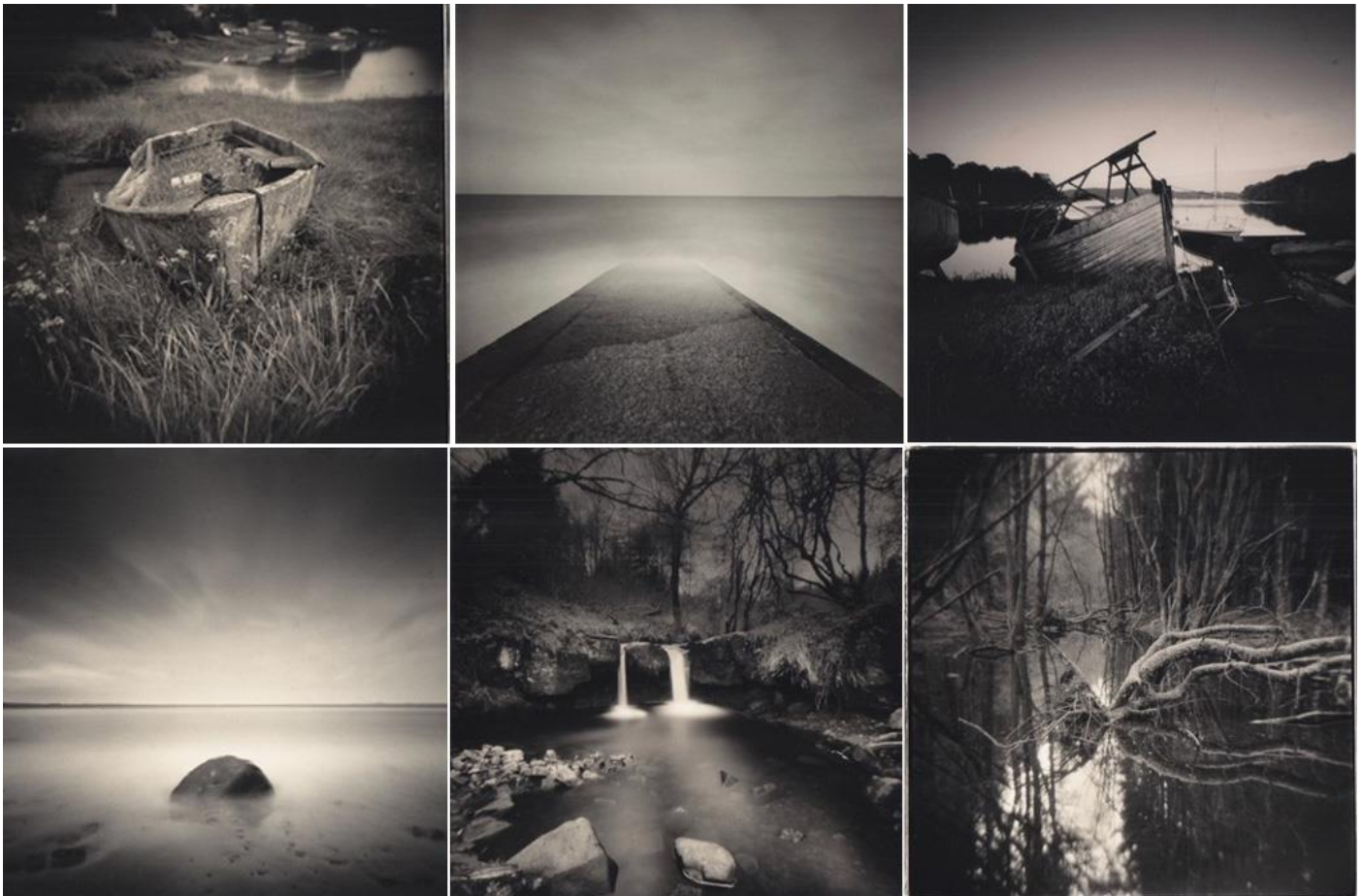


Images by Dave Jowitt

I am a great fan of the OM in camera Art Filters - particularly the Key Line filters - and use them regularly but am too scared to put them into Club competitions and I have had no success whatsoever with them in Salons.



I still work with film and make prints in a darkroom which in itself is looked upon as an oddity in today's digital world. For a number of years I have been using two very basic lo-tech cameras that take 120 medium format film, a Holga 120n and a Zero 2000 pinhole. Both these cameras are capable of producing atmospheric images that can sit alongside each other in a panel of work. It is not my goal to produce a one off eye catching image I prefer to work on themes and panels of pictures, looking to create images that convey a mood. These are pictures from two ongoing themes, long exposure coastal work and the other about woodlands. The unattributed quote below sums up my current approach to photography. *Regards, David Lingham*



*"I don't strive for sharpness or crispness in photographs. Instead, I try to reproduce how my mind's eye sees and to evoke an emotional response in the viewer. Between sharpness and a better photograph, sharpness loses every time. Imperfection is beautiful. Sharpness can make a good image better but focusing on just getting something sharp can make an image lifeless and boring. The emotion of motion blur, and grain in film, it gives us something organic that connects us to the images we see."* Anon

I have a Club talk entitled "And Now For Something Completely Different" which I have delivered widely in person throughout Scotland and the rest of the UK via Zoom. Here are three of my images.



My initial idea was to create a jigsaw from a picture of a jigsaw power tool and image 2 is me physically doing that jigsaw of a picture of a jigsaw power tool.

Image 3 is me doing an online jigsaw of me doing the physical jigsaw of the picture of an actual jigsaw power tool.

*David Sadler*





I gave up submitting images to the annual Federation competition several years ago, as I never seemed to do very well and it was dispiriting. I mostly do wildlife photography these days, but every now and again, when I have enough time or have an exhibition coming up, I'll create one of my photomontages (or composite images if you prefer). They tend to be influenced by the surrealist images I admired when I was a teenager.

Thanks for trying to open some eyes to new things,

*Dave Wicken.*

Daisy Crossing the Road, The judge scored it 13/20 for the over-processed base image and 21/20 for the concept. He quite fairly awarded the Average of these scores with a 16!

*David Sadler.*



I've been working on my style of creative photography for around 5 years. Before my love of



photography grew, I studied to be a graphic illustrator with a serious interest in comic books, Fantasy, sci-fi, animation, and myths. I use these skills and techniques developed during that time in my editing style. An image has to start with a idea. Creative digital editing is just another tool for the piece. No one looks at film poster and sees an actor standing against a green screen. That doesn't sell the story. My choice of cosplay and fantasy concepts allows me to produce images within the genres I love and have a passion for within the medium of illustrative creative photography.

However within Club and competition photography, Creative work in more contemporary styles is generally not as well selected and when it is it, suffers much deeper scrutiny. I've been told this style is still far too unproven to be used in Championships, Distinction or competition photography but how can it ever be tested if it is not given the opportunity to have more eyes on it?



While images grounded in a fine art traditional style are plentiful, there seems to more issues surrounding graphic creative photography within UK based competitions. Meanwhile a lot of the modern and future generation of photographers see this style of composites and special effects as the norm. I feel that artists who use this style of work are already running into a brick wall, before they even get to compete against their peers.

My goal with my work can be summed up in a quote from my potential panel statement, *“I want to create images that feel like you are looking at a Hollywood blockbuster film that has been paused so that you want to hit “play” to see what happens next. These images should feel like self-contained worlds. Worlds where strange and horrific creatures roam the streets, where superhumans in brightly coloured costumes scale glass buildings and soar through the skies, where Gods and legends walk amongst everyday people. a world of Marvels!”* Dean Irvine.





Vision of Atlantis by Dean Irvine



## LET'S BRING LIFE TO TOYS with DAN BEECROFT DPAGB



I started my journey in toy photography way back in 2007 when Dando, a small Amazon box robot was released in Japan. I created some fun scenes and photos with him for a few years, but this then became a big phenomenon with photographers all over the world, so I stopped.

In 2014 I started a project called Mr Lego where I carried a Lego figure dressed as a tourist around in my camera bag and took photos of him while out on photoshoots, placing him in iconic locations as if he was on holiday.

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Fast forward to 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the world in lockdown, I found myself with a lot of free time and a desire to create. I had always been fascinated by the world of toys and action figures and decided to explore this interest further.

I set myself a challenge to recreate a scene from every Marvel movie using Lego figures, this was a fun little project and filled up plenty of time as there were 27 movies at the time.

I'm now an avid collector of toys and action figures and have started to build my collection over the years. I believe that toy photography is a way to bring joy and wonder to people of all ages and that it has the power to transport us to new worlds and experiences.







Dan Beecroft-ET - Home



Dan Beecroft-Magic Forest



Dan Beecroft-Loneliness



Dan Beecroft-Mr. Lego @ Greenwich



Dan Beecroft-Ronin



Dan Beecroft-Rogue Trooper



Dan Beecroft-The Bounty Hunter



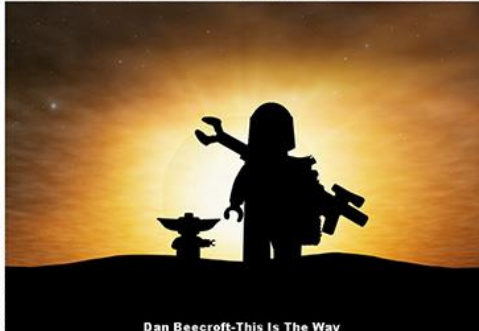
Dan Beecroft-Teenage Delinquency



Dan Beecroft-The Brave Penguin



Dan Beecroft-Trust Issues



Dan Beecroft-This Is The Way

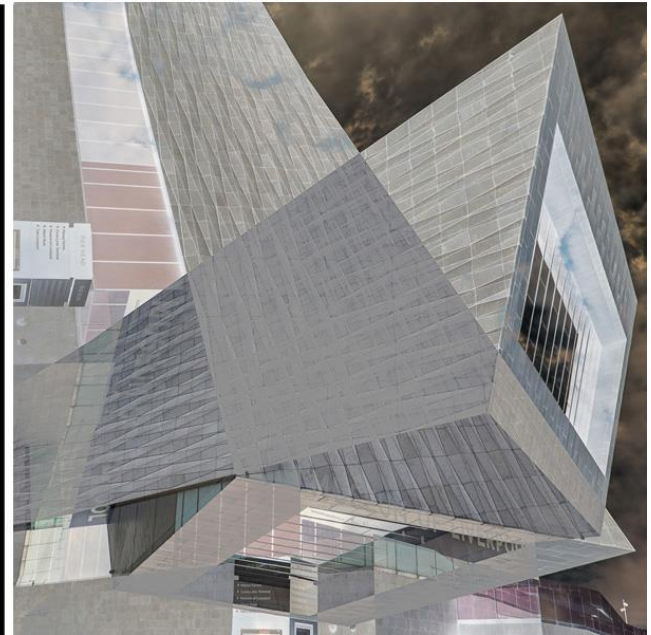
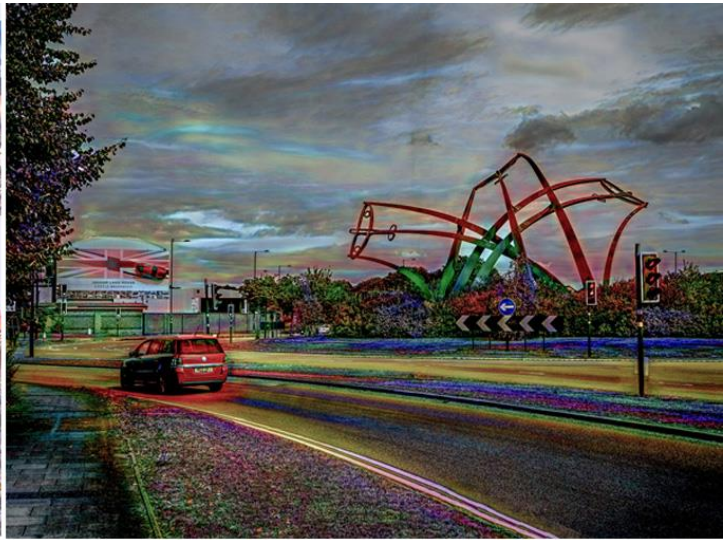


Dan Beecroft-The Night Watch

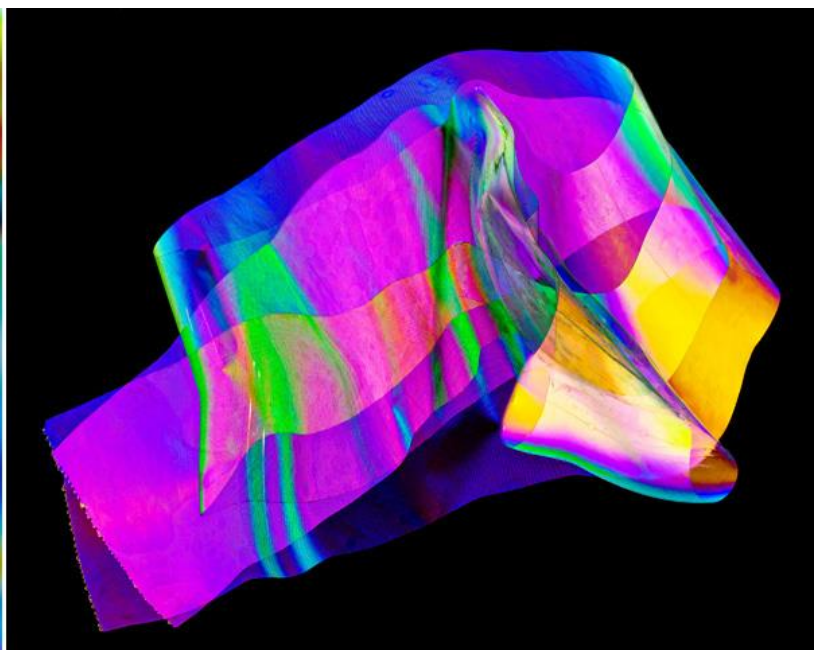


APOCALYPSE and JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL by Francesca Shercroft





Images by Glynn Harris. [CLICK ON any one to see these and more on our website.](#)



Different is my trademark in a lot of my images. I have faith in all my images and would hope they could better themselves by getting them out there if you consider them Different enough. I have a number of these images and I am attaching just two to see if they can be useful in **e-news**.  
*John C Hayes*





Jeni Harney



I started out in camera clubs, then got myself a photography degree. Now I'm back at a camera club where I enjoy the social aspects, but I also want to share my photography.

A little context. The photography I did during my degree is extremely different to club photography. It's all about context and meaning. A lot of questions get asked, such as why you took the picture and who is it for. It requires time to understand it, looking at the image, reading the artist statement and then looking at it some more so you can see if it resonates with you as a viewer, and whether you can see what the artist was trying to achieve. Club photography is almost the complete opposite. Your picture, especially in competitions, is considered extremely quickly and the viewer doesn't really have time to think about the image before they move on to the next one. It's about the immediate visual impact. In competition, it's also about conforming.. Is it sharp? Is everything in focus? Does it tell a story in that brief few seconds the judge looks at it?

I feel that I have found a balance between these styles of photography and I'm trying to bring some of what I learned during my degree, and my explorations since then, into my club.

I work with film as well as digital photography. I experiment with alternative photographic processes and, as well as making images that fit the formula for competitions, I like to throw a curve ball or three into the mix.

I still have a traditional darkroom and I make prints there and enter them into competition. I make hybrids, say an inkjet print of one of my scanned negatives and I enter my alternative process prints as well. My work is generally well received by the members of clubs I have been at. People are interested in knowing how a cyanotype print is made, and I give demonstrations.



These birds were shot digitally over a couple of weeks. I converted the pictures to mono, inverted them in photoshop, and used an inkjet printer to print them on to transparency film. I then coated my paper with cyanotype solution and made this set of prints.

<< **Cover Image.** This is a wet cyanotype of Cosmos. It's made by coating the paper with a light sensitive cyanotype solution, placing the flowers on it and then adding extra liquids. In this one I used soap suds. I also sprinkled turmeric as well. I sandwiched it between a board and a piece of glass and placed it in the sun for a couple of hours. The heat from the sun, the liquids and the plant material all combine to create the image. I brought inside, rinsed and left it to dry. This one was photographed whilst still wet, as I loved the colours. As it dries, it darkens, and the pale blues turn to Prussian blue. I entered this into a quarterly competition and was extremely shocked that it scored 20 points!

**Image 8.** I also like to tone my cyanotype prints. This was made the same way as the birds but was bleached in soda crystals and then placed in a tray of very strong, cheap coffee. The tannins in the coffee react with the iron that's left in the paper and give it an almost sketch-like appearance.

**Image 4.** This is my take on the Pep Ventosa 'In The Round' style. I shot this on a super slow film, ISO 1.6! I entered this into a club competition and titled it 'The Temple at Heaton Park' as that's what the building is. The judge gave it a score of 18 but said he would have preferred to have been left wondering what the image was, and that the title took away some of the mystery of the picture.

**Image 3.** I really enjoy printing in the darkroom. When I entered this in our quarterly competition, one of the members commented that they knew it was a darkroom print as soon as they saw it. This print scored 16.

The darkroom is becoming much more accessible again. There are community darkrooms where you can pay a small fee and be able to process your films or print your negatives using an enlarger and they all run beginners workshops as well.

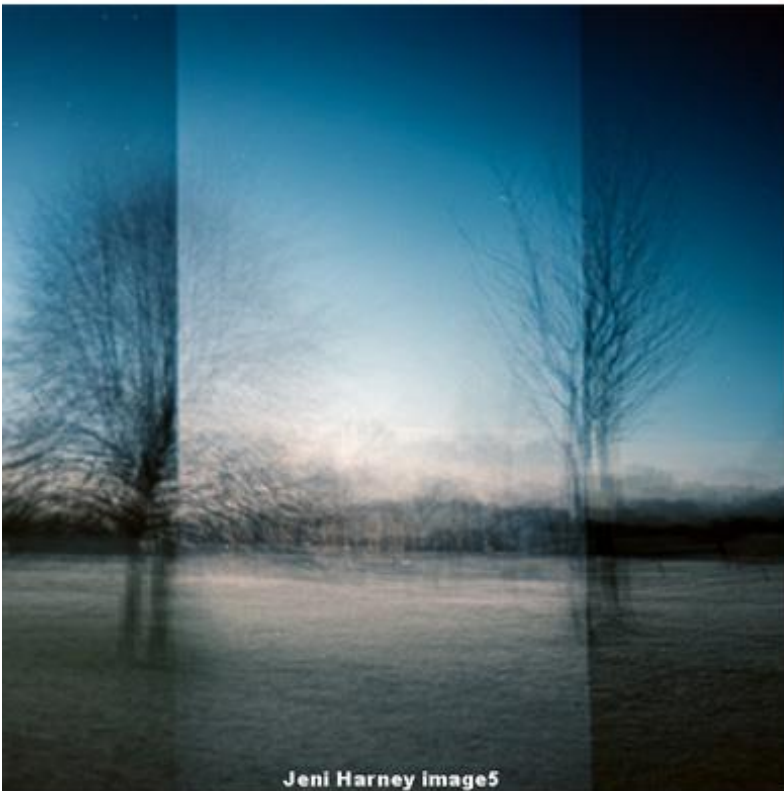




Jeni Harney image8



Jeni Harney image4



Jeni Harney image5



Jeni Harney image3

Cyanotype is one of the least toxic, and cheapest of the alternative processes, and is really easy to do. It feels so much more rewarding to have a print that you've made yourself, and whilst you may have used a computer for part of it, it is a handmade print. I have run workshops in the past on using the cyanotype process to print your images and these have been very well received.

*Jeni Harney.*

**This is only VOLUME ONE of Dare to be Different. I hope that you have enjoyed looking at the images and that you will look forward to VOLUME TWO!**

**My thanks to everyone who contributed images and words and those whose work has will be published in Volume Two.**

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