

by Steve Sonheim

PHOTO SILLY

Introduction

Making good photos.

This class is designed to help you make some good photos and think like a photographer. But it isn't going to be a step-by-step on how to improve your photography...

In other words, I am not going to give you: "10 Tips for Photographing Kids" or "Tricks for Better Indoor Photos." Those books are out there.

This is more like a quick aerobics class for you and your camera. Exercises to build your seeing and thinking muscle.

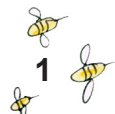
Good photography is hard and there are some situations where it is really, really difficult to get good shots. Despite what the camera store guy said.

What I hope to do is help you create situations where you can create good shots. Photography is largely about controlling the situation you are in. And while I can't tell you exactly how to do that, I can give you some tools for thinking and seeing that will help you find your own solutions. It's a "teaching a person to fish..." kind of thing.

It's Not About the Camera

Remember, a camera is just a recording device and, for all the technical advances, it is still only does one thing and that is: make an image of what you put in front of it.

Buying an expensive camera and expecting great pictures is like buying a good stove, reading the instruction manual and expecting to be a good cook.



To make a great meal, you start with an idea, gather the best ingredients you can find and carefully prepare it. Same is true with photography: idea, ingredients and preparation. Therefore, we need to dispel the myth that you can make a good photograph in any situation if you just get the right settings or have the right camera.

A good photograph is a combination of good light, good subject, good composition and good timing.

A friend and I were looking over some photographs he took of a mountain range and he asked what settings he should have used to get a better shot. My answer was, "The settings are fine, you just should have been there earlier in the morning." And that is almost always the answer to people with problem photographs: Come back at sunset, move away from the window, face the other direction, get in the car and drive to the other side of the valley...

Most of the features on today's cameras are poor attempts at a technological solution to a bad lighting situation. You can spend a lot of time trying to figure out all the camera tricks for making your images look a little better OR you can spend your time finding and creating good lighting situations that will make your images really great.

(You can't expect to make a delicious dinner by throwing together whatever happens to be in the fridge and sticking it in your expensive oven.)

So what are those good ingredients? Learn by immersion and observation the way babies learn to talk. Study the world and study photographs and then shoot and shoot and shoot. Be prepared for a lot of babble before a few a nice, clear words start to pop out.

Steve

